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“GOSPEL TRUTHS.”

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS “NEWTON.”

Third Edition.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE four papers contained in this book were originally compiled from notes of lectures delivered in London by the Author many years ago.

After having passed through several editions as separate Tracts, they were ultimately published together in one volume. The present publication is a second and revised edition of that volume.

Its object chiefly is to instruct and comfort such as are "feeble-minded" in the family of faith, that so they might be strengthened to serve more vigorously and more faithfully Him who has loved them and given Himself for them.

February, 1872.

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JUSTIFICATION.

"THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."—Romans v. 1-11.*

The subject of this passage is the condition in which they who have been justified by faith are placed before God. The chapter commences with the words, "being," or (more properly) "*having been* justified." It is a past tense.† It speaks of justification as a thing done—completely and for ever

* τὴν καταλλαγὴν.

† Δικαιώθεντες.

done. Justification, remember, is a work of God towards us in *this* world. It belongs not to the time when He will sit on the throne of final judgment, but it takes place here—even whilst we are yet in the midst of present circumstances of evil, whilst Satan's temptations are still known, whilst the flesh "in which no good thing dwelleth," still remains. It is into the midst of such circumstances that justification comes. "Having been justified," are words which Scripture employs to denote a present condition *here*; and the words of Scripture are not the words of man. They have the value of words spoken by the Spirit of the living God, just as if you beheld Him, and heard His voice with your own outward ear, so truly are these words the words of God; and He says, "having been justified"—making it altogether a complete, a finished, a past thing. The feeblest, therefore, of you who believe—the feeblest who has touched by faith the hem of the garment of Jesus—who has not despised the blood of the Lamb—the feeblest of such are entitled to say, "having been justified."

And now, who can have the title to justify? Can any one excepting God, justify? Surely, if there be any word that becomes the lips of God alone, and can never be found in the mouth of any creature—which it would be blasphemy for any creature to use, it is this: how could any creature say, "*I justify*"? What title has any man to justify another, any more than to redeem another? He cannot redeem; he cannot justify.

“Justify,” is a word that belongs to God, in the fulness of His own glorious power, as He sits upon His own throne of sovereign judgment. It is a word spoken by Him judicially—spoken by Him as a judge, in the plenitude of His authority as a judge. Whatever title He has to condemn, that same title He has to justify. “Condemn,” and “justify,” are evidently opposed expressions, and are continually contrasted in the Scripture. Observe the places where the words “justify” and “condemn” occur in contrast, and then say whether any doubt as to the meaning of “justify” remains. Look, for example, at Romans viii., “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” This, and similar texts (for they are many) will sufficiently give you the thought connected with justification. It is the opposite to pronouncing the sentence of condemnation. What if you were to hear God say, “I condemn thee for ever and ever to suffer that which is due to all thy sins”? That would be condemnation—judicial condemnation. Now, justification is the opposite to this. It is the pronounced sentence that declares a person righteous in the sight of God. It is the judicial sentence of full acquittal. Earnestly I beseech you to remember this. The great effort of Satan throughout Christendom, in every age, and in every heart that has not received the Gospel, especially in the Church of Rome, has been to assign to justification a sense different from this. He has laboured to induce

men to believe that when the Scripture speaks of God justifying sinners, it means the *making* them righteous—inherently righteous, by means of something infused into them, or else produced from them. Now, remember, this is *not* what the Scripture teaches; such a doctrine dishonours Christ, and nullifies God's work of grace in Him. The moment your hope of being justified before God becomes connected with anything that is infused into you, or is developed from you, whether by the expression of words, or by deeds done, or by feelings felt, or by the heart's best inward experiences—the moment your hope rests upon any of these things, it rests on something that is of, or in, the creature; and it rests not on Christ alone. Could I, with this book of God in my hand, look on any of you and say, such and such a person is justified in consequence of certain features of character he has developed towards God, or because of certain experiences wrought in his soul, or in consequence of his having duly bridled the sin that is in him? Is this what you would have me say? That would indeed be very different from saying, that he is justified because God acquitteth him, and forgiveth him, and pronounceth him righteous, solely on the ground of what Christ the Saviour hath done. "Men and brethren," said the Apostle, "through this man (that is, Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things." Very different doc-

trine this, from teaching that we are justified by anything infused into us, or felt by us, or wrought in or on us, or produced from us. But I need not, I trust, dwell further on this point to you. I trust you are aware of the infinite need of jealously watching this vital doctrine of our faith.

I said, that to be justified, means to be pronounced without guilt, or righteous in the sight of God—for righteousness cannot be separated from guiltlessness in the estimate of the divine law. In the courts of God, he who is not righteous is guilty; and he who is not guilty is righteous. Human laws are for the most part prohibitory; they command us *not* to do certain things, and the having refrained from doing that which is forbidden, is deemed the great mark of absence of guilt. Divine law, on the contrary, is characterised by that which it enjoins, even more than by that which it prohibits. The great Expounder of the law—He who spake as never man spake—said, that on the two first commandments, namely, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself,” hang all the law; and these two commandments are mandatory—not prohibitory. They do not forbid, but they enjoin. Again, human legislatures never demand the affections of those for whom they legislate. They think not of reaching the heart. All that they require is, that there should be no manifest violation of their

commandments. We must be very careful, therefore, not to delude ourselves by drawing any false parallels between divine and human law. Divine law claims the inward affections and obedience of the heart, as well as outward obedience in word and in deed. It requires that that obedience should not be negative merely, but positive—that is to say, it requires that all enjoined by the law should be performed, as well as that all which it prohibits should be avoided. Divine law requires positive, active righteousness towards God. It asks not merely for the negative condition of *not* offending, but it says, “Give me thine heart, with all its powers, all its energies to love, and to own, and to serve me supremely.” Was it not so with the Lord Jesus—the Righteous One? To Him distinctively righteousness belonged: but what would you have thought of the Lord Jesus, if His character had been negative only? Was His life marked by *not* doing evil merely; or was it inwardly and outwardly an active life of positive righteousness towards God—a loving, serving, glorifying Him perfectly and unremittingly, with every power of body, soul, and spirit? Such was the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. He was the “Living One,” who came down into this earth, not merely to keep Himself from evil, but to live towards God in all the perfectness of heaven. Now that is righteousness; and if any one hath not this righteousness, then is he guilty—guilty

of breaking God's holy law; guilt and condemnation rest upon him. If, therefore, God be pleased to say to any of us, "I pronounce thee guiltless," it is the same thing as saying, "I pronounce thee righteous."

In pronouncing righteous, or in pronouncing guilty, God acts on the principles of His own holy courts; and those principles He has Himself established. Justification, therefore, has often been said to be a "*forensic*" word, *i.e.*, it refers us to the principles on which God acts judicially in His own courts. One principle of those courts is, to recognise righteousness wherever righteousness is actually found. But another principle of those courts is, to admit the atoning and imputative efficacy of the righteousness of Another. On either of these grounds the principles of God's holy courts admit of His saying, "I pronounce thee righteous." In the first case, the righteousness would be intrinsically our own; in the other case, the reason of our being pronounced righteous, would be the being represented by Another. But on whichever of these grounds the justification were pronounced, the result would be the same. According to the judicial principles of God's courts (and in that sense, *legally*), we should be pronounced, esteemed, and treated as possessed of righteousness.

Now if any of you will say, that you have inwardly and outwardly, in thought, in word, in deed, by night and by day, perfectly and unremittingly

kept all God's holy law ; if no foolish thought has ever been harboured in your bosom, and no idle word been spoken by your lips ; if selfishness has never swayed you, but perfect love to God marked every feeling of your soul in joy and in sorrow, in public and in private, in the church and in the world—then, with this claim in your lips, enter the courts of God ; say that you are perfect ; say that you are like Christ ; say that you need no substitute, no redemption. Prove your claim before God, and there is no question but that His laws will recognise it.

But is this the condition of man—fallen, transgressing, sinful man ? Turn to the Scripture. The Scripture gives us the history of man in his relation to God, and in this light, what more painful book than the Scripture ? Is it not the history of pride, uncleanness, transgression, ripening at last until, as we read in the Revelation, it openly defies God, and is swept away by His manifested judgments ? Is not this the history of man as man ? And if we read respecting the saints themselves—such, for example, as Jacob and David, do we not find something in their lives in which their holiness fails—something over which we might weep and weep for ever, if it had not been that grace had come in and abounded where sin abounded ? If it had not been for grace, the same righteous sentence which shut out Moses from Canaan, would have shut him out from the heavenly inheritance for ever. When weighed in the balance of God's holiness he was found wanting.

The Scripture is indeed a record of human sin. The savour of uncleanness and death is found in all the ways and thoughts of man,—something that is selfish and perverse—earthly and adverse to God—none answering to their responsibilities—none rendering a due return for their natural, providential, spiritual mercies—none meetly loving, serving, glorifying God. How then can man be just with God? How can he be clean that is born of woman?

We could never have answered that question; we must have closed our lips for ever, if there had not come into the earth One who brought into the earth, and sustained in the earth, the perfectness of Deity. It was Jesus—that holy babe Jesus—from His birth to the tomb maintaining in the earth the perfect holiness and purity of heaven. Such was the path of the Lord Jesus, and how met by man? If there had been any communion of thought between God and men, it would have been manifested on their part in loving, honouring, appreciating the Son. But they appreciated Him not. He was as a lamb among wolves, as a tender heavenly plant in an unkindly clime. Instead of cherishing it, they put forth their evil power as the wild boar of the wood, and trampled it to the ground. He needed sympathy, and they gave Him scorn; He sought for kindness and they gave Him curse. Such was the relation of man to the Sent of God—the Son of His bosom.

There were indeed a few who received Him, but even they when the hour of trial came, forsook Him and fled, and He was left deserted and alone. Has not God then marked well the difference between His holy child, Jesus, and all that is in the earth besides? Truly He understands and has estimated the difference between the heavenly perfectness of His "one righteous servant," and the baseness of everything that is of the flesh, whether you see it as in Peter and John forsaking Him, or as in Pilate or Caiaphas, or in any one else who may have gnashed on Him with their teeth. Wherever you see the mere flesh, *there* you have to say is my natural self, and *there* is the sphere of sin, condemnation death. And now what use has God made of this excellency thus found in His child, Jesus, that most precious of all His gifts; for what are all outward mercies, what is the sun that shineth or the rain that descendeth, what is there that eye hath seen or thought conceived, so precious as the person, and life, and services of the Lord Jesus? How then has God used these things towards us, I mean, towards those who believe? He uses them to justify. The death of the Lord Jesus under wrath (for He died bearing the wrath that was due to the sins of His people); His obedience also, in life and in death, are made by God the ground on which He accepts us, both as forgiven and as righteous. The moment we believe, the laws of God regard Christ as our

Substitute. Instantly, therefore, guilt ceases to be charged; and instead thereof, righteousness is imputed. Observe how this was taught in the types of the Jewish ritual. After the guilty person had laid his hand on the head of the victim, the victim was stricken. It received the blow that was rightly due to him who had laid his hand on its innocent head. Here was vicarious death. But next, the body of the victim was burned on the altar of God, as an offering of sweet smelling savour. The fragrance thereof ascended gratefully into heaven, even unto the presence of God. Here was the type of imputation of righteousness; for the excellency of this fragrance was attributed to the person whose hand had been laid upon the victim's head. Thus, all who confess the name of Jesus, having the excellency of His obedience attributed to them, stand in its meritoriousness before God. Is there anything that your thoughts can conceive* more excellent, more perfect, than the righteousness of Christ? It is human righteousness, it is divine righteousness. He was man, and He was God. Therefore not one element of perfectness, or holiness, or purity that you can conceive, as pertaining to God in His own essential glory, was wanting to the obedience of the man Christ Jesus,—that obedience in life and in death whereby all who believe are “constituted righteous.” And in that day when we shall all stand before Him, when every conscience will apprehend the difference between that which is of the flesh, and that which is of God, how shall

we then appreciate the being found in Him, not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God, through faith in Jesus! Thus, then, we can well understand how God is able to pronounce righteous, persons worthless like ourselves. "By faith He justifies the ungodly." The righteous service of the Lord Jesus is a past thing, already finished, already perfected. He, therefore, who is accepted in it must be from that moment "justified." If God be indeed pleased to impute the value of the meritorious obedience of Christ to any, He necessarily must, even on the ground of His own truth and holiness (not to speak of His love) pronounce that person righteous to whom the value of Christ's substitutional service is imputed. This is the hope of the believer. This is the reason why the apostle is able to say, "HAVING BEEN justified." Oh, that you may simply credit these things thus preached unto you by God! It is He who sends His servants to declare them, to speak of this most precious righteousness, that you, seeing your worldliness, your defilement, your impurity, your worthlessness, your earthiness, knowing yourselves to be lighter than vanity in the balances of God, may say, "Let me stand before Him in that most perfect righteousness." This is what God desires; therefore He preaches Christ to you. You may hear the message just as if you were the only individual in the world to whom it was addressed—God speaking from heaven, and proposing this grace to you, because you are a sinner. If you are not a sinner,

then you have no title to it; but if you be a sinner, if you be a child of the first Adam who sinned, if your life-blood be tainted in him, then in the fact of this your condition of sin you find your title to look to Him who is preached to you, on the ground of your being a corrupt, sinful, lost child of Adam. Your title to look to Christ is indeed found in a fact connected with yourself; but it is not grounded on the presence of anything that is good in you, or well-pleasing in any sense to God. Your title to look is grounded, not on your righteousness, but on your sin; not on your sanctity, but on your corruption. May you then simply receive the message of God's goodness. May many a heart say, "Lord, I believe; I cast myself on Thee."

And, now, suppose I were to seek the ground of this mercy towards you in anything that is connected with yourselves—suppose I were to seek it in any of the results that flow from being accepted in Christ, say, for example, the gift of His own Spirit—would not that dishonour Christ? If we receive salvation simply on the ground of what Christ hath done in that one perfect oblation once offered on Calvary, then the crown is on His brow—then He is the Saviour; but if acceptance depend in any measure on anything else, even on the work of the Holy Ghost Himself, then Christ is not exclusively the Saviour. The totality of salvation is taken from Him to whom alone it belongs. And would God sanction this? Would God, after His Son had done and suffered what He did, in order

to be the Saviour, in order that it might be said of Him alone, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain . . . for he hath redeemed us to God by his blood;" would God lightly allow the honour of being the Saviour to be taken from Christ, and elsewhere ascribed?

It is true, indeed, that there is created in all believers the embryo of their future glorified being, called in Scripture "the new man," wherein also the Holy Spirit is sent to dwell. But this indwelling presence of that blessed Spirit is a *consequence*, not a *cause*, of justification. Moreover, does not the flesh remain in us after we are justified? And what is the relation of the flesh to that Spirit whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption? It "lusteth against the Spirit." It is antagonistic to the Spirit, it thwarts every feeling that the Holy Spirit suggests; and succeeds in impeding, even when it does not succeed in frustrating, its desires. Thus we find even the apostle James obliged to say, "In many things we all offend"—and yet James had the Spirit of God. So far, therefore, from your relation to the Holy Spirit affording any ground of justification, you would be placed under double condemnation, and wrath for ever, if you *there* sought the foundation of your hopes towards God.

The highest description of human perfectness to be attained here, is described in the Scripture* as

* See James iii. 2.—"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

being an ability to restrain or "*bridle*" evil. Now "*bridling*" was not the perfectness of Christ, for in Him there was no evil to be bridled; neither is it the perfectness of heaven; neither can it ever be made the ground of acceptance there. Even then if you were ten times more watchful than you are (I speak to believers now), if you were ten times more successful than you have been in your conflicts with the sin that dwelleth in you—nay, if even St. Paul himself were present, we should still be obliged to say even of him, that he had many times hindered the Spirit that was in him. Surely, if there be any sins that need to be borne by the Saviour, they are the sins committed after we have believed. None but a hardened conscience, ignorant of what nature is, as opposed to the Spirit of God, could ever rest in any relation which it has sustained towards the Holy Spirit as dwelling in us. Thankful, indeed may we be for His indwelling presence; thankful for every instance in which we may have been enabled to resist our flesh, and to bring forth some fruits of righteousness unto God; but on what ground are those fruits of righteousness received? God accepts nothing from the hands of the unjustified. God can receive nothing that proceeds from those on whom the guilt and condemnation of unpardoned sin resteth. He cannot have communion with such, nor receive anything at their hands. But when He is pleased to accept any in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to view them through the medium of His excellency

then He is able also to accept their services, in the title of the same name in which He has accepted their persons. The acceptance of the person *precedes* the acceptance of the service; and therefore, every accepted act of service is a perpetual proof that justification is a past and completed thing.

The apostles, in their epistles, continually allude, either in the way of contrast or illustration, to former relations which Israel had been accustomed to hold towards God. Israel had once had a temple, in which the glory of God had dwelt; and they justly counted the privilege of access to Him there, to be one of their chief and most distinctive blessings. Accordingly, you will observe, that in this chapter, the apostle speaks to us, too, of access—"By whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand." True, we have no outward temple, no visible presence of God's glory, no outward place of access; nevertheless we have access *by faith*; and that which *we* find when we draw nigh is GRACE—fixed, unalterable grace—"grace," says the apostle, in which we are "set," or "made to stand." Israel, when they drew nigh, found, not unfrequently, judgment; for they were under law. Fixedness they never found; all was transitory—evanescent—mutable. They did, indeed, behold God's glory, but they never could rejoice in it as theirs. Happy if they could escape its destroying holiness; it never entered into their thoughts to say, "we rejoice in expectation of that glory." Yet these are the words

which the apostle places in our lips—"we rejoice in expectation of the glory of God." The altar, around which we worship, is a better altar than Israel's. The Cross is our altar, for there the Holy One offered up *Himself*. Our altar has sent up once, and for ever, its accepted fragrance—fragrance that has ascended into the heavens, and the excellency of which is so attributed to us, that we are precious according to its preciousness, in the sight of God. The outward eye sees not these things, but God's Word declares them. It says we have an Altar; we have a Temple; we have a Sacrifice; we have a Priest. These things are the portion of the feeblest of you who believe. The moment you believe in Jesus you have a temple—even "heavenly places," "not made with hands," into which He has entered to represent you. There He has been acknowledged as your sacrifice; there is your Priest; there has been presented the incense of His own most precious name, which has filled the sanctuary for ever with its accepted fragrance. The moment you believe in Jesus you are instantly in covenant with God, and every one of the mercies taught by those vessels of the sanctuary—altar, laver, censer, mercy-seat—all are covenant (and therefore everlasting) blessings unto you. Consequently, you may say, using the typical description of your condition, that you are ever near an altar, the fragrance whereof envelops you for ever. Your spirit may, as it were, ascend with the fragrance that ariseth from that altar, and go with it into the place into which that fragrance

has entered. Thus is the soul of a believer shrouded when it passeth away. It discovers then, if not before, the true nature of its blessings. Defective instruction, ignorance, worldliness, may cause it to go through life sorrowfully, the hand hanging down and the knee feeble, when, suddenly perhaps, at the hour of its departure, it recognises the fulness of the blessings wherewith it has been endowed in Another. Well, it might have recognised all this before; but a film was on the eye. Such is the condition of many a believer; and, therefore, although God is at peace with *them*, yet they are little conscious of peace with God. In the present condition of the Church especially, many a believer may be found with whom God is at peace, even for ever and ever, yet they have little conscious peace towards Him: so different is it to have peace with God above, and to have peace dwelling, like a dove, in your own bosoms. Many things may hinder this; carelessness may hinder it, worldliness may hinder it; but often it arises from a want of clearly understanding the relation in which they who are justified by faith are everlastingly set in relation to God. In such a case, believers, true believers, seem sometimes the furthest from peace of any: for the world has a false peace that comes from Satan. Seeing that they know not the nature either of sin or righteousness, Satan keeps them in tranquillity, by suggesting calm, delusive thoughts, and by removing such things as might awaken doubt or cause trial in their hearts. "They are not in trouble as other men." But if, through

God's mercy, any one discovers the hollowness of the world's quiet and sees the judgment to come, yet for want of plain instruction respecting Christ, fails to discern the fulness and completeness of redemption, how can there be, in that case, anything else than trouble in the soul? When we see that every thing in us (I speak of that which we are naturally) is like a restless sea, whose water casts up mire and filth; when we find that examination into the nature of that which dwells within us brings no remedy, but only adds strength to the terribleness of conviction, where can the soul look for refuge? We cannot divest ourselves of our own being; we cannot annihilate ourselves; we cannot cast ourselves out of ourselves, any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, and "sin"—essential sin—is only another name for our natural selves. The discovery of this is, indeed, bitterness of sorrow; neither is there any remedy for this sorrow until we see that the acceptance of the sinner is made by God to depend, not on anything that has been or will be connected with himself, but solely, and entirely, on the excellency of Another. The moment we see this, and discover, too, that acceptance implies a constant and abiding relation, we begin to understand the nature of the peace given to us above. True, indeed, the heart of a believer may be troubled below; but this affects not the peace *with God* which is preserved for him above. Christ, by the appointment of God, preserves it there, even for the most doubting and harassed

believer. To believe, therefore, is one thing; to have peace in believing is another. Believers may, or may not have conscious peace. They should have it—it is a blessed thing for them to have it—but frequently, they have it not; and are far more conscious of the sorrows and conflicts arising from increased knowledge of their own evil, or increased temptations of Satan, than of tranquillity and peace. A believer, too, may disobey and grieve that Spirit whereby he is “sealed unto the day of redemption.” The Holy Spirit, observe, is, in this passage, spoken of as the seal, by which God marks all those who are His. It belongs to God *to seal*; and He seals as His all who believe, by sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. Thus He seals them unto the day of redemption. There is great certainty implied by the expression, *seal*—God *sealing* us as His own, until He shall openly claim us as His own. The ground, indeed, on which the Spirit is sent to dwell in a believer is, the accomplished fact of peace being secured in Christ above. As the witness of that fact the Holy Spirit comes. But now, suppose you grieve that Spirit—would not the Spirit, when grieved, cause the heart in which he dwells to feel that He had been grieved? And thence would result sorrow, not peace or joy. Thus, although the fact of His presence would still remain as the abiding evidence that you had peace with God above, yet your grieving Him would cause him to be the minister of sorrow to your hearts. You can have little difficulty in recognising that. Ever remember,

then, to draw the distinction very clearly between peace in the sanctuary above, secured for ever by what Jesus hath been and is ; and that conscious peace, which should, yet may not, dwell in your bosoms.

I have already called your attention to the words "grace wherein we stand," or, more literally, wherein we have been "set" or "made to stand" (ἐστήκαμεν). Israel boasted of having access to God in an outward sanctuary, and they found many mercies at His hand ; but it could not be said to them, ye draw nigh "into grace wherein ye stand." Indeed, there was no *standing* at all, no *settlement*, nothing *abiding* in the relation of Israel to God ; for they were under law, not under grace. God was then revealing Himself according to His holiness, and not in the grace now revealed in and through the Lord Jesus. There are few words of deeper moment than these, "grace wherein ye have been made to stand." They imply the action of God's hand towards us, causing us to stand in grace before Him for ever, imputing righteousness and refusing to impute iniquity. "Grace" is a word which must not be limited in our thoughts to "mercy." It includes mercy ; but mercy is often shown by God towards those who despise or reject His grace. "Grace," as here used, is the unmerited favour of God through Christ, so exercised towards us, as to bring with it the sure possession of all that is given in Christ risen. It brings not only forgiveness of all our sins ; it involves, also, all that positive and everlasting

favour, all that completeness of love, which, we are told, is in the ages to come, to show its exceeding riches in its kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. It comes freely, unmerited, and unattracted by anything in ourselves; for it comes in the name and in the worthiness of Christ the Lord. If this favour of God come to me because of what I am—because of anything that His Spirit may have made me; if it depended on my inward or outward conformity to His holiness, how should I tremble? What hour could I look at, through my whole life, and say, “I am willing that the favour of God towards me should depend on what I did and felt in that hour”? Is there, in all your history, one such hour on which you could fix? No! every hour would make us tremble, if we stood in the presence of God to be judged according to its deserts; therefore, He who has abounded towards us in wisdom and in prudence, has appointed that his favour should rest on us in life, in death, and in the hour of glory, entirely and exclusively on the ground of what Christ is. Many recognise the fulness and freeness of this, when forgiveness first reaches them in the depth of their misery and sin; but they are slow in apprehending how, in the same fulness, it follows them through all their subsequent course, healing their backslidings, restoring them, preserving them, and loving them freely. As, then, it is God that justifies, so is it God also that “has set us” in this abiding grace; and on this ground it is that we are enabled to say, “*we rejoice.*” These words

“we rejoice,” (or rather we exult or glory, for it is the strongest word used in the Scripture to denote exultation of spirit,) are thrice used in this passage —“we rejoice in expectation of the glory of God;” “we rejoice in tribulation;” “we rejoice in God.” Now, in virtue of what power do believers thus rejoice? Is it by any natural power within them, or is it in virtue of a power placed within them by the Holy Ghost? Did any of you ever, even with the feeblest lisping of your hearts, say “I believe,” except through the Spirit of God? Would our hearts ever have said, “Abba, Father,” if we had not received of his Spirit? You never had a single thought or feeling that was meet, and fitting, and rightly directed towards God, except through the Holy Spirit; and therefore, such feelings as are implied in the words, “we rejoice,” and the like, are not ascribed to us in virtue of any natural strength or natural power, but solely because God has given to us of His own Spirit. Hence, these expressions are, in a way which would otherwise seem unaccountable, applied to *all* believers. Many believers, perhaps, when they read of rejoicing in tribulation, and the like, may be disposed to say, that they neither rejoice in tribulation, nor in expectation of the glory of God; yet, the Scripture says, that we, as believers, rejoice in both. How then is this to be accounted for? It is accounted for thus—the Scripture, in such passages, speaks of believers with reference to those powers and feelings that are inherent in them through the gift of the

Holy Ghost, and not with reference to the use made of those powers, or the degree of their development. Thus, when the Lord Jesus was about to leave His disciples, He spoke of their knowing many things which, they in their reply, said, they knew not; they thinking only of what they consciously knew and felt, whereas the Lord Jesus spoke of those new inherent powers of knowledge and of understanding into which they were being brought by Him. Again, it is said of believers, that, "they judge all things," and "know all things," and "have the mind of Christ," whereby is meant, not that they absolutely possess all knowledge, but that they have the inherent capacity of all knowledge, because of the "new man" that is "created" in them, and because of the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in them. Therefore, the apostle boldly says, throughout this passage, "we rejoice," because such is the true and right condition of the Church as having the Holy Ghost. What if I were able at this very moment to strike off from you the hindrances of the flesh—those natural impediments that still cleave to you, what would remain? Nothing but joy, thanksgiving, praise, and all perfect development of glorious being. And are not those joys and those new developments the eternal things? Are *they* not the true realities of our condition? *They* remain; but everything else that is personally connected with us will pass away, as soon as mortality is swallowed up of life. Therefore, in the language of faith, we identify not ourselves with those things which are to pass away,

but with those things that remain in the power of eternal life.

How great then the difference between the thoughts of men touching justification, and these, the revealed thoughts of God! The blessings which God giveth through redemption stand not in the insecurity of the creature, but in the eternity and unchangeableness of Him who liveth for evermore. "Having been reconciled by His death," says the apostle, "much more shall we be saved by His life." Mark well the words "*much more.*" If the *death* of the Lord has had the power to reconcile us to God when sinners, shall not his *life*, in glory, have power to preserve us after we have received reconciliation? Such is the summing up of this passage, so full of the testimony of grace and peace. It is true, indeed, sorrowfully true, that this testimony of grace may be abused by our flesh; for our flesh is base enough to abuse everything. The apostle therefore felt it needful to say, "Shall we then sin that grace may abound?" and unless our doctrine were open to the same danger, it could not be the doctrine of the Apostle. But God withholds not the testimony of His mercy, because man may choose to turn it, like everything else, to evil. He declares, and will continue to declare this testimony, for it is the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth. God gives the blessed testimony in all fulness, and in all simplicity; His Spirit watches over it, and they who receive it in that Spirit will say with the Apostle, when the thought of abusing it is presented,

“God forbid.” May this be the language of our hearts. May the knowledge of these free mercies cause us to cleave more and more closely to Him, who has said that nothing shall separate from that love which is in Christ towards us. It is not we “who have first loved Him, but He who has first loved us.”

THE following texts show the meaning of the word “*justify*,” as contrasted with “*condemn*” :—

“If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall *justify* the righteous, and *condemn* the wicked.” (Deut. xxv. 1.)

“Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, *condemning* the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and *justifying* the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.” (1 Kings viii. 32.)

“He is near that *justifieth* me, who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall *condemn* me?” (Isa. l. 8.)

“The publicans *justified* God.” (Luke vii. 29.)

“That thou mightest be *justified* in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” (Rom. iii. 4.)

“That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world *become guilty* before God; because (διου) by the deeds of the law shall no flesh *be justified* in his sight.” (Rom. iii. 19.)

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being *justified* freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. iii. 23.)

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.)

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*. Who is he that *condemneth*?" (Rom. viii. 33.)

It is obvious that in all these texts (and many more might be added) "*justify*" is used in a "forensic" and declaratory sense, and implies that the person to whom it is applied, is pronounced free from charge. Whether the ground of such declaration be the intrinsic righteousness of the person, as when the word is applied to Christ or to God, or whether the ground be the imputed righteousness of another, as in the case of a believer, the meaning of the word is still declaratory, and cannot mean "*to make righteous*." It would be blasphemy to apply such a meaning to Christ or God ; they who are essentially and intrinsically righteous, cannot be *made* righteous, although the consciences and lips of their creatures may be constrained to own and to declare their righteousness, as when it is said, "The publicans *justified* God,"—"Wisdom is *justified* of her children,"—"That thou mightest be *justified* when thou speakest."

The great effort of the Papists at and after the Council of Trent, was to destroy this sense of "*justify*," and to explain it as meaning to "*make righteous*," viz., by infused grace.

When challenged to produce texts to prove this meaning, they turn to the *Apocrypha* ! thence they cited the following words, "Religion or piety justifies the heart"—words which do occur in their authorised *Latin translation* of Ecclesiasticus,

but which are not found in the original Greek at all!! But, observe their consistency, whilst quoting a passage which is not in Ecclesiasticus at all, they pass over another which is, and in the same chapter, viz., "Unjust anger cannot be justified," where "*justify*" is used in its proper sense.

The Papists quoted also a text from the Apocalypse, viz., ch. xxii. 11, but in this they were misled by an erroneous reading, for *δικαιωθῆτω* is not the right reading, but *δικαιοσύνην ποιῶστω*, (let him do righteousness still,) as is now acknowledged.—See Tregelles.

The only passage which even *seems* to give a colour to their falsification of the meaning of justify, is not in the Bible, but in the Apocrypha, viz., Ecc. xviii. 22. Any one however, who candidly examines this passage will admit, that here too, "justify" is used in its ordinary sense. The passage is this, "Put not off the being justified till death." Strange foundations these, on which to rest the Anathemas which they have pronounced against the doctrine of justification, as taught in the Scriptures ; for they have said :

"If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than reliance (*fiducia*) on the divine mercy, remitting sin for Christ's sake, or that that whereby we are justified is reliance, and reliance only, let him be accursed."—*Council of Trent, Canon xii.*

This, however, is what we do say, and, through God's grace will say for ever.

ETERNAL RECONCILIATION.

Genesis iii. and Romans v.

I HAVE already observed,* that the special object of the fifth of Romans is, to reveal the fixed condition of blessedness which pertains to them who HAVE believed on the Lord Jesus. One object, indeed, of God in the Scripture is, to shew how open He has made the door of access for the unforgiven sinner: so that part of His instruction concerns those who are yet without the fold—*unjustified*. To them, warning them of their sin, and its judgment, and of the impossibility of cancelling it by anything within the scope of human power (for “no man can redeem his brother, or give unto God a ransom for him”), God speaks of Christ as the One through whom He receives into reconciliation and peace, all who believe. Thus, the moment any one believes, he is no longer *without*—he has passed the narrow door—he is *within* the fold. Then, it becomes important to know what this new condition is; whether it be one that is so left dependent on man—so made to rest on the uncertainty and evil of his flesh, that the blessing, like Paradise, can be lost; or whether it be so given

* See previous paper entitled “Justification.”

in Christ, as to have in it fixedness and eternity. It is to this question that the chapter before us leads.

But first, I will speak a little of those who are without. It was for this reason that I read to you the early narrative respecting sin in the third chapter of Genesis, when sin first entered. *One* sin, and that not the greatest that ever has been, ruined those who committed it, and has ruined all who have naturally descended from them. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Think for a moment of the woe and anguish that surround us. Think of the world's past history; murder, hatred, war, wickedness, all adding to the weight of human misery, all deepening the general groan. Amidst all the varied circumstances of humanity there is not one heart really happy. Some are wearied and worn, others miserable. All this has sprung from *one* sin. God was so holy, that He appended to that one transgression those fearful consequences, and others more fearful still—consequences that go beyond this present sphere, where the eye of man reacheth not, where hope never comes—a lesson solemnly teaching the holiness of God. The conscience of Adam and Eve early trembled before that holiness. Whilst, indeed, God was yet distant, before He came into the garden, they knew little, and felt little, of the consequence of their sin. They were, probably, light-hearted enough. They had still the garden around them, yet blooming in the perfectness of its beauty: the earth was as yet uncursed: they had still one another to love. So far

the circumstances were not changed. There was opportunity, therefore, for carelessness and unconcern: but the moment that God drew near, as soon as they perceived the tokens of *His* approach, they instantly hid themselves from His presence. That was the first thought of their convicted hearts: they dared not meet God: they hid themselves among the trees of the garden. Such, indeed, must be the relation to God of every one who is unforgiven—whether his sins have been little or great; whether they have been hidden in the secret thought of the bosom, or displayed widely and destructively. I say destructively,—for who of us can tell the destructive effect, even of our least sins, on others? How may we hinder others! How may we prove a stumbling block to others! Who can reckon up the effects of his sins? But, even if there had been no manifested sin at all, can a heart, in which uncleanness and evil are hidden, do otherwise than shrink from the purity and holiness of the presence of God? Seek not, I beseech you, to judge yourselves by any human standard; but think of the purity of the Holy God—Him in whom there is light, and no darkness at all. You will soon see the reason why Adam and Eve trembled, when the voice of God summoned them from their hiding-place and said: “Adam, where art thou?” It is the only instance recorded in the Scripture, in which God has yet openly called any before His judgment-seat. By-and-by all those who are unforgiven—all who are not in Christ, will be called before the Great White Throne of which we read in

the Revelation (Rev. xx.); and books will be opened against them, that they may be judged according to the things recorded there. Such is the doom of all who are not in Christ Jesus, all who are unsprinkled by His blood: but it will not be the portion of believers. No such books will ever be opened against *them*—*they* will not stand before the Great White Throne to be so judged. “He that believeth in me,” saith the Lord Jesus, “shall not come into judgment” (κρίσιν). He does not say merely that such shall not come into condemnation, He says that they shall not come into *judgment*; that is, they shall never be called as criminals to His bar. They have already passed from death unto life. Is this a relief to any heart? Ah! it is a relief to those who have first considered themselves, and then thought of that awful hour, when the books are to be opened, and the dead caused to stand there, to be judged according to that which has been written in the books. The record is not to be cancelled. The page is not to be swept clean by any act of the mercy of God through the redemption of Jesus then. There it will stand with every secret thought, every feeling, every word, every deed recorded; and there presented to the apprehension of the heart, when that heart shall at last be able, with a conscience no longer deadened, to see and contemplate the past in the light of Heaven, in the present light of the holiness of God. Such is the terror of that future judgment; and, therefore, the voice of mercy has said, “He that believeth in me shall

not come into judgment;" God hath justified him ; he is free. And see how the inability of men to meet judgment was manifested, even in this early scene in Paradise. Adam and Eve were summoned into the presence of God to be judged for that which they had done. And could they answer? Could they say anything for their defence? What Adam did was to thrust Eve forward to receive the stroke of vengeance. In the bitterness of his soul he thrust her forward, as if it could benefit *him* for her to be judged. Ah! it could not benefit him—but what could he do? All his natural love was turned into bitterness; her whom he had most loved, he now most hated; for she had tempted him, ruined him. A heart full of remorse and black despair can find no better relief than in accusing others or upbraiding God. "The woman," said Adam, "whom THOU gavest to be with me." And Eve—the cause of all this ruin—abandoned by her husband, hated by him she loved—charged with the guilt of all this ruin, what could *she* say? She could say nothing, save that she was tempted by the Evil One, and that she had believed his lie, and had mistrusted the love of God, and had thought that the Serpent would lead her to a good wrongfully denied to her by God. Where, then, could there be any remedy? Could guilty, self-convicted sinners, such as these, supply to themselves any hope from the circumstances that had passed, or from any that were present? Whence could hope come? Only from God. But God they had never thought of since their sin, in any other

light than as a God of judgment. Conscience taught them that; and therefore, expecting only judgment, as soon as they heard God's voice they hid themselves, as well they might, till they could hide themselves no longer. Such will be the condition of every heart that thinks of God only according to that which conscience teaches. Not that conscience should not speak. It is, no doubt, a worse thing for conscience to be altogether hardened or deadened, so as to hear no voice, to answer to no appeal: yet, even in its best *natural* condition, conscience would only speak respecting God as a God of Judgment, but would never bear witness to His ways in *grace*. God in judgment is one thing; God exercising grace is another. Now which was needed by Adam and Eve, grace or judgment? God knew what was needed; and, therefore, before he finished his sentence upon the Serpent, before He appointed the punishment either of Adam or of Eve, He spake the word of grace, and said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." This was *promise*. God then, for the first time, became a God of promise to sinners; and what was the effect of this on the heart of Adam and of Eve? They were able to say, Lo, He hath promised. He from whom we expected only judgment, hath not only spared us, but hath loved us, and made us a promise. God, as a God of promise, and as a God of grace, became at once a new object to their souls. The circumstances around them had not lost their darkness—their original condition was forfeited—their life, as to

this world, ruined ; but a new object was presented to their view—an object of faith, and of reliance—God dealing with them in grace, God speaking to them in promise. The lips from which they had expected judgment, had spoken of blessing. It was this that had arisen like a light before their eyes—a light of heavenly brightness shining on dark and troubled waters. They did not, indeed, understand the nature of the promise through which they hoped ; they did not know who the Deliverer was, nor how God would bring to pass the promised mercy. They could not explain as much respecting Him as any of you before me now could ; but that is not the question. Ability to understand or to explain the methods of God is not faith ; nor necessary to faith. Faith is reliance on God, and on God's promise of blessing through Christ. When the poor needy soul, under a consciousness of its misery, turns in its destitution to God as a promiser through Christ, it believes. The moment Adam and Eve believed God, the moment their hearts said, “On His promise I rest,” even though understanding not its nature (indeed, understanding nothing aright, no, not even the depth of their own misery), yet, the moment they heard God thus speak, and in their inmost souls hoped in Him thus promising of Christ, there was faith—justifying faith. There the link was formed that bound them to blessing. The very first act recorded of Adam afterwards seems to show how their souls were renovated in hope, for he called his wife's name Eve, that is “Life”—her whom, just

before, he had been accusing. Whilst Adam thought only of God as a God of judgment, no wonder that he should look upon Eve as death. Death, through her, had entered; death was about to reign here; all his expected experience was death—what, then, could he see in Eve excepting death? But the moment he knew God as a God of promise and grace, all was changed; he speaks not of death, but of life. Prophetically, no doubt, and under God's guidance, he called his wife's name "Life." It is a name of blessing; a name of hope; a name that cheers; a name, the full blessedness of which will never be understood till all the redeemed shall be seen in their final glory—when even she, through whom sin entered, shall be known also as the parent of those who shall stand risen and glorified in the power of heavenly life received through the Seed of the woman—the Son of the living God.

And now, let me ask you, will any among you say that your condition is less sinful than that of Adam and Eve in that day? Has there not been, in our case, greater light? Have there not been far higher privileges—a knowledge of sin, and of Satan, and of God, such as Adam and Eve had not: and yet, there have been multiplied transgressions—not merely one transgression, but multiplied iniquities? Shall we say then, if called into judgment, that *we* could stand? Judgment may be postponed; but you well know that God *must* at last be met in judgment by all who receive not the word that He now preaches respecting Christ. God now speaks

to you individually; less visibly, indeed, but not less certainly than He spake to Adam and Eve in the garden. He proposes to you peace—everlasting peace—everlasting acceptance in the name of His Son. If your souls despise God thus preaching peace—thus speaking of the blood and righteousness of Jesus, and of His own willingness to receive and welcome you therein—if you reject this grace, or carelessly turn from it as an unworthy thing, then nothing remains except to meet God in judgment. And when He once begins to act in that judgment, then He will exercise no grace. The day of grace will have closed. He will sit upon the Throne of His judgment to administer strict righteousness unmingled with any grace. There is no mingling of these things. Grace has no place in judgment, nor judgment in grace. We must either meet God acting in the sovereignty of grace, and forgiving freely in the title of the name of Christ; or else, we must meet Him on His judgment Throne, exercising unmitigated judgment. At present His ministry is the ministry of reconciliation—at present, in love, and in tenderness, and as one who yearneth over souls, He testifies of the great Sacrifice and says, “Look unto Him, and be ye saved.” But an hour will come when He will speak of that sacrifice and of that grace no longer. May you then consider Christ, who He is, why His blood was shed, why you need His righteousness; and as you hear God in His word, and by His ministers, testifying of these things—

testifying that you might believe and live, may you be enabled to say, "Lord, I believe," even though you may be constrained to add, "help thou mine unbelief." Faith is reliance of soul on God testifying respecting the blood of the Lamb. The soul that has thus believed is connected with all that God knows to be in Christ Jesus—with all that God makes Christ to be to the Church that He hath chosen. The feeblest who believes is connected with it all. It is not the strength of our faith, nor the maturity or truthfulness of our experience, nor the amount of peace that may flow from our knowledge of these blessings, that gives us a title to say that they are ours. Have our souls said, "Lord, I believe;" if so, all blessing is ours. Many who have thus looked to Jesus, may be very ignorant of the certainty and extent of the blessings given in Him—very ignorant, perhaps, of the extent of their own sins. They may be disquieted, harassed, dismayed, misled by the Deceiver, scattered like sheep in a cloudy day, and that, too, into "fouled" pastures. Such circumstances are very adverse to peace—but yet, have they believed? Has Jesus been preached to them, and have they rejected Him, or have they said, "This is the Christ, the Son of the living God?" The moment that the disciples' hearts were able thus to recognise Christ, did not God receive them? Their hearts were ignorant, wayward, peculiarly needing to be controlled; but did not God undertake their care? Did He not control and teach

them? In the chapter before us, we find part of this teaching. It is intended for those who *have* believed—perhaps feebly believed; but it distinctly unfolds to all believers the character and the fulness of the grace in which they stand. And, observe, how entirely the blessings spoken of in this chapter are shown to come to us as *sinners*. Suppose any should say, Has not God loved me because of that which He saw I should become under His hand? Has He not loved His own image in me? Such has been the deliberate doctrine of some; and, as a thought, it frequently lingers in many a bosom. But shall we say of any believer that he was loved, not as a sinner, but because of the fruits produced, or destined to be produced in him? There was great grace, great vigour of thought, and energy of service in St. Paul. God failed not to recognise these things; He approved and valued them. They were the fruits of His own Spirit. But did the love of God towards St. Paul owe its origin to these things? Was their attractiveness the foundation—the procuring cause of God's favour, or was he loved as a sinner? Let this chapter answer. "Scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The love of God is commended to us, on the very ground that there is the absence of attractiveness, and of all qualifications of righteousness in those towards whom it is exercised. The saints of God may have

many and precious endowments—in Heaven they will have all perfectness; yet, all they have, or may have, in time or in eternity, is only the result of that love which went forth towards them as sinners. Here is the peculiarity of the love of God—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He first loved us.” Hence the feeblest believer that now hears me may trace back the love to its own eternal source, and say, “It was toward me from everlasting; it has ever followed me; it found me when there was nothing attractive in me, when all was vileness, yet, even then He loved me, even because He was pleased to love me.” The foundation, therefore, on which His love rests, is laid apart from ourselves altogether; it is found in the purpose of His own will, and, therefore, it is secure for ever. Never, therefore, let any believer measure that love of God which bringeth to him both salvation and glory (for “whom He justified, them He also glorified”) by results wrought in him: however agreeable and well-pleasing to his heavenly Parent such results may be. The fruits of God’s Spirit are precious—precious here, and in the world to come; but they are never to be exalted into that place which belongeth to Christ alone. Christ is the Saviour, not the Spirit. The Holy Spirit glorifieth not Himself, but Christ. Besides, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are the *results* of salvation, and *results* are not *causes*; and moreover, they are results which we hinder often, and deprive of their right development; and is there anything well-pleasing in that?

No, the believer knows that he has to confess this as sin continually ; and on this very account the more, he ascribes salvation to the Lamb.

And observe the words of the Apostle in the passage before us. To whom does he ascribe the effectuation of this “reconciliation?” Is it not exclusively to Christ, through the work finished by Him on the Cross? And how sure its results! “If,” says the Apostle, “we have been reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled (*καταλλαγέντες*) shall we be saved by His life: and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.” If you look to the margin of your Bibles, you will see “reconciliation” proposed as the translation instead of atonement—and reconciliation is the right translation. Atonement and reconciliation are two different thoughts: reconciliation is the result of atonement—when atonement has been made and accepted, reconciliation follows as a consequence. Atonement is a word that occurs again and again in the Old Testament. Our thoughts are by it directed towards God as One whose Governmental holiness demanded satisfaction. His righteous claims must be recognised and satisfied first, before any results of blessing can flow down to us. “Take a censer,” said Moses to Aaron, “and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone forth from the Lord; the plague is begun.” (Numbers xvi. 46.)

It is from such a passage as this that we learn the true meaning of atonement. It teaches us of an expiating, propitiating, appeasing, satisfying oblation *made unto God*. Atonement has God for its object. He appointed it; He, by the mission of His Son, provided it; He has accepted it; and if atonement has been made for us and accepted, reconciliation is the immediate and necessary result. When the one great oblation for sin was once and for ever rendered on the Cross, the blood of the Holy One that was there poured out was the evidence both of perfect obedience rendered, and of penalty fully borne. The claims of God were thereby satisfied, and the result was perfect reconciliation. And even as the act of Christ in presenting that oblation, and thereby obtaining eternal redemption for all His people, is an act never to be repeated, seeing that it was an act that effectually accomplished all that it was intended to effect, so the reconciliation that results therefrom is equally unchanged and certain. Christ cannot again repeat the oblation of Himself. Has He done it insufficiently? No, He has not done it insufficiently. Well then, if He has not done it insufficiently, the result must be sure; and what is the result? Reconciliation. To whom? To all those, whose sacrifice and whose Priest Christ is. And who have Christ for a Priest and a sacrifice? Believers—all who believe—it is of faith: so that the feeblest of those who believe are reconciled, and that for ever. Reconciliation cannot be separated from final salvation, for the words of the Apostle

are express—"If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE having been reconciled we shall be saved by His life." Shall we seek to discredit those words, or shall we simply receive them, and rest peacefully in the faithfulness of God?

And here, for a moment, I must beseech you to remember that none are reconciled—none brought in any sense under the blood of Jesus, except those who believe. I dwell on this, because there is sometimes much confusion of thought respecting this, even in the minds of believers themselves. Satan, too, is anxious to confound the limits that mark the Church from the world—to represent the world as in some sense redeemed, and believers as partially and uncertainly forgiven. I repeat, then, that they who have not believed are in no sense *under* the blood of Jesus; nor are any of their sins forgiven. "On him that believeth not," saith the Scripture, "the wrath of God abideth." Sin cannot be partially forgiven; for if any one believeth, to him *all* sin is forgiven; whereas, to him who believeth not, no sin is forgiven; but on him wrath *abideth*. Postponement or delay of judgment, or the removal of special chastisement, such as that removed from Nineveh in the days of Jonah, is not the forgiveness of sins. Nineveh was spared that chastisement, but it will have to answer for all its sins at the great final day.

Now it is true, indeed, that the mercy shown to Nineveh, as well as every other mercy that flows to men, as men, is given through Christ; but to receive

temporary mercies *through* the blood of Jesus, is a very different thing from being brought *under* the value of that blood. The former is the lot of all men; the latter pertains only to those who believe. The world abounds with the natural gifts of God's goodness to His creatures. Before sin entered, such blessings could be given *without* blood being shed; for it was no imputation on God's holiness to send blessings on the innocent. But can God send blessings on a world of sinners? How can He spare them, how sustain them, how send them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness;" how could He send to them His Scriptures or the ministration of the Gospel of Grace, except the blood of Christ enabled Him, in consistency with His holiness, to act in goodness towards a rebellious world—"to be kind towards the unthankful and the evil?" The sun that shines, the air that we breathe, the fruits of the earth in their seasons—in a word, every blessing that man receives as man, is the purchase of the blood of Jesus, even for those who despise it, and are never brought under its saving efficacy. Not unfrequently, men as men—men who do not pretend to be sanctified by the blood of Jesus—wicked men—cry unto God in their distress. They cry to Him as their Almighty Creator, and He heareth their cry. I remember one very wicked and abandoned man, but finally, through God's abounding mercy, converted to Christ. I remember his saying on his death-bed, that what finally encouraged him to seek the mercies

of God for his lost soul, was the remembrance that God had, even whilst he was rushing on in his career of wickedness, answered many times one particular prayer that he was accustomed to address to Him when he periodically visited a certain place, from which few, who visited it, returned alive. Sensible of his peril, as he drew near the dangerous place, he was accustomed always to ask that he might be spared to return alive. Time after time he entered—time after time he saw his comrades swept away, but himself spared. Who can doubt that his inference was true, and that God did indeed hear his unworthy cry? Is it not the very thing which the Scriptures teach? Read the following passage: “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them to their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” Many are the natural mercies which men as men receive from God through Christ *as the*

Mediator between God and man; but this relation is not a relation of salvation. It pertains to multitudes who are never brought to the blood of sprinkling, and therefore have no inheritance in His kingdom and glory. Natural mercies, although given through Christ, bring no salvation to the soul. But when God comes and speaks respecting Him, who, being the Mediator between God and man, is preached also as a Saviour through faith in His blood—when God proposes to the sinner everlasting remission of sins through the blood of that Person by whom natural mercies come, then, if the soul hears and believes, it is brought into a new relation to Christ and to God, such as naturally it never knows. Then, it not only receives blessings *through* Christ as “the Mediator between God and men,” but it is *under* Him as “the Mediator of the New Covenant,”—a relation wholly different—held only by those who believe. And what is the stipulation of God in the New Covenant? It is this—“I will remember their sins no more—I will write my laws upon their hearts—I *will be* to them a God, they *shall be* to me a people.” It is a covenant of unconditional promise and therefore sure—the fulfilment of the stipulations not being left to the changeableness of the creature, but undertaken by the unchanging faithfulness of God. We can well understand why the sins of all who are under this Covenant should be forgiven. It is because of the one oblation perfected on Calvary, and accepted in Heaven for them. Has not the blood of Christ been shed? Has not the one

great offering been made? Is it useless—has it failed of its efficacy? Is it unable to effect that for which God appointed it? No, it would be blasphemy to say that. Well then, it “appeases” the wrath—it appeases it by presenting unto God’s holiness something grateful, and acceptable, and satisfying to all its claims: and in so appeasing, it appeases for ever. It is, says the Apostle, “eternal redemption.” Mark well the word “*eternal*.” Well, therefore, may the blood of Jesus be called “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” If the covenant be everlasting, the blessings given under it must be everlasting too.

And now, before I conclude, let me turn, for a few moments, to the closing part of this chapter. It speaks of Adam and of Christ—it speaks of them in contrast—of Adam as the covenant-head of man; of Christ, as the covenant-head of redeemed man. Adam was made the covenant-head of all his natural seed. In him they stood, or in him they failed. God was pleased to appoint, that Adam’s sin should not affect him only, but that it should involve all who should naturally spring from him. Their legal representative sinned; therefore they are considered as having sinned. Hence the babe, the moment it is born into the world, has guilt imputed to it, because of Adam’s sin.* “*By one man’s sin many were made sinners.*” “Death passed upon all men on the ground

* Otherwise no infant could receive life in Christ; for none but those who are ruined in the first Adam can receive life in the second Adam.

that (ἐφ' ᾧ) all have sinned." It was an arrangement—an appointment of God. The first impulse of nature, commonly, is to rebel against this. Men say, it is unjust that a sin which I could not help, committed ages before I had any being, should be imputed to me, and regarded as if it were *my* sin. Why should I be looked upon as so connected with Adam that his wicked deed should be considered mine? Does it not seem fearful that there should be such a principle as this in the government of God? How, then, does God answer this? He asks His believing people—all who reject not His method of grace in Christ—whether they would desire that He should discard this principle in His new relation to them in Christ? Would you, or would you not desire that the righteousness, and the condition of your new covenant-head, should be regarded as if it were yours? Have you done the things that Christ did? Have you thought the thoughts that Christ thought? Have you the righteousness and integrity of Christ and His purity before God? Have you any title to His condition of being? Just the reverse—Belial, not Christ, is our likeness, naturally. But if God appoints Christ to be a new covenant-head, then, even, as the sin of the first covenant-head rests upon his descendants, so all the righteousness, and blessedness of the new covenant-head, even Christ, rests on all who are *in* Him: and all are *in* Him who believe—all who scorn not the Gospel of the grace of God—all who turn not from it as an unworthy thing. If, then, there be any blessedness in meditating on

the righteousness of Christ—if there be any thought of joy connected with *that* being reckoned to us which is not our own, shall we part with this joy? Shall we argue against our own blessing? No, we welcome the imputation of Adam's sin, if so it be that the righteousness of Christ, the Son of the living God, is reckoned to us when we believe. We rejoice in the thought of imputation, if the imputation of Adam's sin end in the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Nature is silenced then. We speak not of those who reject this great salvation. If they will persist in rejecting it; if they "will not come" unto Him that they might have life; if they will not receive the simple testimony respecting the pardon of sins in the blood of Jesus, then their blood must be on their own heads. The Apostle, in the passage before us, speaks only of those who believe—those who (to use his own words) "receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness." It is of them he speaks, ruined in Adam, but made to know "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."

But condemnation, through imputation of Adam's sin, is not the only consequence of our relation to our first parent. From him we also inherit sin and a depraved nature—a flesh in which no good thing dwelleth. Sin dwells in us; but who among you can define to me what sin is? You can tell me some of the effects of sin; you can describe to me some of its developments; but not one of you can tell me what essential sin is. No man can. It is personified

in Scripture: it is spoken of *as if* it were an unclean demon that inherited our frame, and swayed all our faculties. Satan himself has within him no principle worse than that which dwells in the fallen heart of man, and is denominated "indwelling sin," which lusts against all holiness, and everything that belongs to purity and to God—leaguings always with Satan. It may be restrained, but it never ceases to dwell in a believer here: we bear it ever within us—the perpetual memorial of that which connection with the first Adam hath entailed. But when we believe, is there no antagonistic power—no blessed principle of life and holiness created in us through union with the Second Adam? Yes, indeed; not only is His righteousness imputed to us, but the moment we believe there is formed within us the embryo of a new being—"the new man." Weak it may be, but it exists in every believer as the principle of a new life that has no communion with the flesh. With the "new man" the Holy Spirit is sent to dwell, that it might be strengthened, and its powers developed. It is not *the ground* of our justification—it is the *result* of justification—a consequence following upon acceptance, just as the sin that is in us does not primarily bring on us condemnation. *That* Adam's transgression did. Adam brought into condemnation by his one sin; Christ brings into righteousness by His one righteousness. *As a consequence* of my being brought into condemnation, sin takes up its abode in me—*as a consequence* of being brought into righteousness in Christ, a new principle of life is implanted in me.

This is one of the great present results of our being accepted in Christ Jesus, and explains the manner in which that promise of the New Covenant is fulfilled, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." But *present* results are not the only consequences of union with Christ. He is risen and glorified, and our life is hid with Him in God. There, alone, the true character of life, given to us in Him, is to be known. It is in Him risen that we see the image of our new being, and learn the nature of the heavenly life and glory given to us in Him. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We have not, therefore, to think merely of that which we *have* received; but of that which we *are to receive* when the great final results of redemption are made manifest—when all that is of sin, all that is corruptible, shall cease, and nothing remain in the redeemed contrary to the likeness of their risen Lord. "I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness." Indeed, from the moment we believe, we are regarded by God as quickened together with Christ, and raised up together with Him, and made to sit with Him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii.) In this sense, too, as identified with our risen Head, we are taught to say even now, "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." In Him we already form a part of the new creation of God.

Such are some of the thoughts involved in the words "saved by His life." His priesthood and

intercession are included in these words; but we have also to think of our life as preserved in Him above, and of the manner in which, by His risen power, He will finally bring us into the possession of its excellency. The words "save" and "salvation," are applied not merely to the forgiveness of our sins, but also to the bringing into that final condition which is appointed to the saved. Thus, then, we can look back to Paradise and see our likeness there—of the earth, earthy. And do we wish to retain it? No, we turn from it; we see there the source of all our misery. However much we may ourselves have swollen the stream of sin and sorrow—however we may have added to its potency, still in that first Adam we see the origin of it all. Every feeling that is in me of sorrow or of evil can be traced back to him. But there is also a second Adam; the everlasting source of righteousness, and life, and all blessing—the head of the new creation of God, and are we not IN HIM? "We are IN Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." If then these things be so—if all that I have been saying be not an idle tale—if the Scriptures be true, does not the Gospel indeed bring all who believe into acceptance and life for ever? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor princi-

palities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Is not this ETERNAL RECONCILIATION ?

“NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHO ARE
IN CHRIST JESUS.”

Romans viii.

THE object of the eighth chapter of the Romans is to declare, for the comfort of all who believe in Jesus, the *results* of the redemption that He has accomplished for them. Redemption, remember, is now an *accomplished* work. The Lord Jesus *has* died: He has *finished* the work which the Father gave Him to do. He came to accomplish the will of God, and it *has been* accomplished. “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. By the which will we [*i.e.* all who believe] HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED [ἡγιασμένοι ἔσμεν] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE.” Thus believers have been sanctified unto eternal life. And are there none that believe on the Lord Jesus? Are all rejectors of Him? Do none confess Him? Are there no souls that have said, “Lord, to whom shall we go away*—Thou hast the words of eternal life?” Surely there are some who have touched by faith the hem of His garment. And shall they not consider their *attained* blessings—the blessings “which have been freely given to them of God?” Shall they always regard themselves merely as seekers of blessing? Are they

* Ἀπελευσόμεθα.

not also to regard themselves as having found blessing, even all fulness of blessing, and that for evermore? All that is needful to bring into the perfectness of eternal glory is granted, through Jesus, to every one that believeth. "All things," says the Apostle, "are yours," "All things are for your sakes." "Ye are filled to the full (*πεπληρώμενοι*) in Him." Such is the fulness which, in Christ, and because of Christ, God hath granted to the feeblest of those who believe. And this chapter is one peculiarly devoted to the revelation of their blessings.

It commences by saying, "There is no condemnation" even "now," even at present. The word "*now*" is an emphatic word. Some may perhaps say, I believe that *by and by* a time will come when no condemnation shall rest on believers; but observe, this passage does not speak of *by and by*; it speaks not of future time, but of time *present*. It is the solemn assurance of God, addressed to all "who are of faith," that even *at present*, there is to such NO CONDEMNATION. And why no condemnation? The reason is this—it is because Christ has borne that which was due to the sins of all His believing people. It is the necessary result of Christ having been THE SUBSTITUTE. What means the substitute? Is it not one who undertakes the responsibilities of others—one who undertakes to act and to serve instead of others; one who undertakes to suffer *instead of others* that which is *due* to others? And this is the relation Christ bears to all believers—not to the world that believe not, (the world reject Him,)

but to the family of faith. He has borne all that was due to *their* sins; He bore it on the accursed tree, where also He presented for them all His own perfectness unto God. Does the burden which He there bore rest on Him now? No, the sacrifice is over; the atonement was complete as soon as the great Substitute said, "It is finished." Unblemished perfectness was presented; the appointed inflictions of wrath were fully borne, and so atonement was finished. Yet He has not ceased to represent His people. He is still their representative, not indeed any longer in suffering and death, but in glory—"In that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." The same text that tells us that He died for (*ὑπέρ*) us, tells us also that He rose for (*ὑπέρ*) us. He who, for others, sustained a substitutional place on the Cross has entered into Heaven to be their representative there. How could condemnation attach to those for whom Christ died—those for whom He gave Himself a sacrifice and offering to God for a sweet smelling savour? In token that no condemnation resteth on them, He now occupieth a place for them in glory. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Accordingly, they who are thus freed from condemnation are spoken of in this verse as united with Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," in other words, all who believe, are not only freed from condemnation, but are united with the Lord Jesus as their risen Head in glory. Indeed, there is no redemption

apart from union with Him who hath redeemed. So God has appointed. Our title to union with Christ in life is an earned title. It has been earned for us by His meritorious obedience and death as our substitute. By His obedience we are "constituted righteous." They who are are constituted righteous through Him, are also quickened in Him. God, as a result of our being covered by Christ's meritorious righteousness, has been pleased to give us union with Christ as gone into that heavenly country from which He came, and soon we are "to reign in life" with Him. Even then, as the first Adam by his disobedience brought us out of the earthly Paradise into this world of sin and misery, so through and in the last Adam we are brought into a better Paradise than Adam lost, even into the Paradise of God.

Are these things fables?—or are they the verities of God revealed by His goodness in order that His people might be comforted?—for they need comfort being "often in heaviness through manifold temptations." But some perhaps will say, "I fear that I have apprehended little of these things, and therefore I have no title to the comfort of them." If our title were to rest on the clearness or adequacy of our appreciation, we should indeed have little ground of comfort. There are few things for which we need to be more humbled than the inadequacy of our appreciation of all things. But the blessings which redemption has secured are not made dependent on the strength of our faith, or on the rightness of our

appreciation—they depend on what Christ has been and is. Our *title* is not in ourselves, nor in anything that springeth from ourselves. The wisdom and love of God has made the ground of all our sure and everlasting hopes to be external to ourselves. Have we then *recognised* (I will not say *duly felt*) our own nothingness? Have we recognised that sin has made us unfit for God—that it has made us inwardly unclean and unfit for the purity of Heaven? Have we heard God speak of the completeness of redemption that is in the blood of Jesus, and have our hearts answered and said, “On this, O Lord, I do cast myself, according to thy word?” Even *that* may be said feebly. But if it be said at all, then there is faith—faith wrought not in the power of nature but of God. And faith is the link—the appointed link that connects us with all these blessings. This secret utterance of the heart, followed by the confession of the lips, bringeth “unto righteousness,” and “unto salvation.” It implies reliance on that which God hath provided to be relied on, even the work and perfectness of Jesus. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Such are IN Christ Jesus, and to them there is no condemnation. But there is a second clause in this verse which is occasionally used so as to qualify, or rather, nullify the former. Some hearts seem to possess great skill in destroying their own comforts—nature (and nature can act even in believers) having always a perverse satisfaction in undermining

the doctrines of grace. Accordingly, many, when in the concluding clause of this verse they find the words, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” read them as if they were conditional, and say, “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus *if* they walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit:” therefore say they, we must first learn to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, and when we have done that, then we may look to Jesus and believe there is no condemnation resting on us. Such is not unfrequently the interpretation given to this verse. It happens, however, that this last clause is, *in this place* (not in the 4th verse, but in *this* verse) an interpolation—that is, it is an addition by some human hand, and does not form part of the Word of God at all. But if these words were genuine, they would, even then, speak not of a pre-requisite condition, but of a *consequence* resulting from being in Christ Jesus; just as if I were to say, Christ hath loved and washed from its sins the Church which, whilst militant in the earth, testifies by His appointment the gospel of grace to others. Who does not see that the latter clause speaks, not of a pre-requisite to, but of a consequence of, the blessing spoken of in the former? As a consequence of being His Church, they are employed by Him. As a consequence of being in Christ, they cease to walk in paths of service to the world and its evil; they become walkers in new paths. By the determined appointment of God they are brought into and

preserved in "the narrow way." We may walk feebly in our new paths—we may stumble in them, but still, from the moment we believe, we belong to new paths in which the world never walk. Look, for example, at the Apostle Peter. He believed; he made a simple though not a very full confession of Christ, and it was said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." He was on the Rock—no condemnation rested on him. He was in Christ Jesus. Great temptation afterwards came on Peter, and he sinned grievously. But was he allowed to quit the path of faith? Did he leave the narrow way and go back to the broad way, and follow again the mere natural course of thought and feeling that others followed? No, there was One who watched over him with faithful care; One who prayed for him that his faith should not fail. He did indeed deny his Lord and Master, and that at the moment when he ought most peculiarly to have confessed Him; but his faith in Jesus did not fail. He still believed in Him, rested in Him, loved Him, even though under the power of temptation he denied Him; and it was shown by this—that as soon as Jesus looked on him, his heart responded to the look. No look, no word of the Lord Jesus melted the unbelieving heart of *Judas*; but as soon as the Lord Jesus looked on *Peter*, his heart softened—"he went out and wept bitterly." He belonged to a path essentially different from that in which Pilate and Caiaphas, and Judas were

walking, even though in that path he stumbled. And who is there among all the saints of God that has walked in that path without stumbling? Even though God's watchful care surely brings His people into a path different from that of the world—though He gives them new desires, new hopes, new employments, yet their faith is often weak—their step feeble. And if of those who are thus tottering or feeble it were asked, Have you much joy in walking in these new paths in which the Spirit leads? They might reply, “We cannot say that we do feel much joy or much comfort—nay, we often feel doubtful and tremulous.” Well indeed might we all feel doubtful and tremulous, if the ground of our hope was the vigour or steadfastness of our step in the new paths of God. The ground of our hope is not that—but Jesus. It is faith in Jesus that gives us a title to say, I belong unto God, and to His paths. The having new paths, and the having a shepherd-hand over us to preserve us in these paths, are blessings *consequent*, necessarily consequent, on faith in Him. They are concomitant blessings that accompany acceptance in Him. May we then receive in the fulness of their comfort these words, “Now therefore there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.”

And being freed from condemnation, we are set free also to *serve* Him, even though “sin in the flesh” remains, and stamps its evil impress upon all that we *naturally* are. No believer that examines himself will find much difficulty in recognising what

is indicated by such expressions as these: "The law of sin in my members"; "the law of sin and death"; "the mind of the flesh"; "sin in the flesh." Fallen human nature has become so infected by and virtually identified with sin, that "sin in the flesh" may be regarded as a fitting title for our natural selves. And even though in the believer there is a new principle—a new and heavenly principle, here called "the law of the Spirit of life in *Christ Jesus*" (because received as a consequence of union with Him), yet the presence of this new principle of life which tendeth towards God and towards Heaven, only makes more manifest the character of that indwelling "law of sin and death" which always seeks to constrain into paths contrary to God. Every natural power that we have, whether in body, soul, or spirit (for we have a natural *spirit* as well as soul and body—"the spirit," says the Apostle, "that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy") all our natural powers are not only marred, but are so brought under the dominion of SIN that they "*serve*" sin. Every thing, therefore, which results from the exercise of these weakened and enslaved powers, bears evidence not only of imperfectness, but of corruption. And the spring of this corruption is not only internal, but self-acting. It requires no external stimulus. If we were to retire to some lone mountain top, and were there to dwell separate and alone, apart from all the interests and activities of human life, we should still (if we honestly examined ourselves) find that we had within us a fountain of thought and feel-

ing earthly, and not heavenly—contrary to purity, and holiness, and God. The mind of the flesh is not altered by solitude, nor deprived of its inherent characteristics by restraint. Wherever it exists, it is, in itself, enmity against God. “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The conviction that he has such a principle of evil within him often causes the heart of the believer to mourn. In our holiest hours, wherever we go, whatever we undertake, we feel that we carry about within ourselves something that is not only unworthy of God, but altogether and essentially opposed to Him. Let it be tested thus: Suppose a believer desires to perform any action that he knows to be right and well-pleasing to God. He begins to perform it, but instantly feels arise within himself a hindrance. There is, perhaps, a feeling of reluctance, or inertness, or the suggestion of some unworthy motive, or some feeling of self-complacency or pride. His conscience looking at these things in the light of the holiness of God, cannot but recognise that there is sin in them; and rightly judges that an action performed by any-one in whom such activities of evil are, cannot be worthy of God. He sees that it must be tainted, and altogether short of the perfectness of Heaven. He is ready to say, “What use is there in seeking to perform any action of good whilst thus hindered and thwarted by evil within?” And, indeed, if God were dealing with us on the terms of Sinai, if we were under law and not under grace, we might well say it is useless to seek to please Him, or

to serve Him, because of this sin that dwelleth in us—"sin in the flesh." But what does the verse before us teach concerning this "sin in the flesh?" It tells us that God has already visited it with damnatory judgment. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and concerning sin, hath damnatorily judged* sin in the flesh"—*i.e.*, our sin in the flesh—the sin that is in the flesh of His believing people. Do not suppose that Christ bore only that which was due to the committed sins of His people; He also bore that which is due to their sinful selves. God was pleased to visit with damnatory judgment the sin that dwelleth in them when their great Substitute died; and therefore we may see in the Cross of Jesus the judicial end of ourselves—our natural selves. With what thankfulness we recognise this when once we become acquainted with ourselves. How thankfully we see in the Cross the end—not the actual but the judicial end—of our sinful selves. We no longer say that we cannot serve God. Atonement has been made for our indwelling sin. Its guilt, therefore, is not imputed to us; nor its taint attributed to our services, because of the Cross. Our services, done in faith, are not only cleansed, but rendered acceptable through the One sacrifice. The same sacrifice that removes the taint, leaves instead thereof the efficacy of its own fragrance. This is as true of our services as of our persons; and thus we are liberated to serve God. May we then thus seek

* κατεκρίνε.

to serve Him. How different the service of the world, and of sin, and of our own corruptions, from the service of the living God.

Multitudes are thinking and speaking of the Cross this day,* but how inadequate are the conceptions even of believers! I speak not of Christendom generally — Christendom generally, nullifies the sacrificial work of Jesus on the Cross. They look on it as having effected no real removal of condemnation, but only as opening a door of mercy—as being merely an *aid* to salvation—as bringing *salvability* indeed, but not *salvation*. Yet even where the Cross is recognised as sanctifying all those who through faith are connected therewith—sanctifying them unto eternal life, according as it is written, "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate:" and again, "sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus once:"—even, I say, where this is recognised, there is often feeble apprehension of the truth of our old man having been crucified with Christ: which is only another mode of saying that "sin in the flesh" has received its judicial visitation at the Cross, and was there judicially ended when our sinless substitute bore its guilt. This is what the Apostle means when he says, "I, by means of the law, died to the law. . . . I have been crucified with Christ." He means that the law virtually smote him—smote him with its wrathful stroke when his substitute died.

* Good Friday, 1855.

But there the thunderbolt of Sinai spent itself—sin received its judgment. The substitute bore the judgment and yet lives; and in Him we are alive also unto God. “Therefore we thus judge that if one died instead of all (*i.e.*, all those spoken of, *viz.* believers) then did the whole (judicially) die.” 2 Cor. v. 14.

The courts of Heaven have recognised this judicial dissociation of believers from themselves, and this association and union with Him who not only died but rose again for them. Christ has risen as “the first-fruits:” and that word is in itself the pledge that all of whom He is the first-fruits, shall finally rise in the likeness of the same glory. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” This is our sure prospect. When changed into the likeness of Christ in glory, we shall find ourselves possessed of *practical* meetness for Heaven. But even here, God always views His believing people as being *in* Christ risen. All His thoughts are towards them as thus united with Him and seated in heavenly places in Him. *There* He has judicially fixed them—*there* He knows them. And He has given us of His Spirit to strengthen us for death to the world, and for life towards Himself, in token of that fixed and unchangeable condition of blessedness which He has given us in our risen Head. There is therefore no middle ground—no intermediate place between being in the completeness of our own nothingness, or else

standing in all the completeness which God has given entirely in Another. The moment we are detached in God's judicial estimate from our own nothingness, we are instantly connected with all fulness. There is no intermediate standing. There are those who remain identified with nature and sin in the flesh, and there are those who, through faith in Jesus, are by God's own judicial act, dissociated from their natural standing, and associated with all the fulness of Christ. And is this not worthy of God? Does it not magnify His love, His grace, His power, and His appreciation of the value of the name of Him, whom He has called "My servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth"—"my righteous servant"—"my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"? The acceptance of believers is to be measured by the acceptableness of Christ. And was not His name always as incense—as ointment poured forth, fragrant with the fragrance of Heaven? Yet this standing in Him is granted to us, and this acceptance made known to us in the midst of circumstances very contrasted with the excellency of the blessings thus given. Not only does "sin in the flesh" still remain, always harassing, tempting, and sometimes ensnaring us—not only are there paths near us against which we have to watch, as paths that lead to death, but we are also in the midst of a creation that groaneth in the bondage of corruption, waiting for the hour of its still delayed deliverance. Not unfrequently, we seek to hide from ourselves this

truth of the groan of creation. We shrink from hearing it; we strive to divert our thoughts from it; we would rather think of the earth as a garden, and invest it with the aspect of Eden. Imagination will with marvellous rapidity present us with a deceiving picture when we wish to be deceived—nevertheless, we cannot altogether close the ear of our conscience. The groan may penetrate the labyrinth in which we may have involved ourselves, and conscience will hear it, and compel us to bear witness to the truth that ALL creation groaneth. The beasts of the earth, the fowl of the Heaven, the fishes of the deep, groan; man, as man, groaneth; and even we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit groan also; for as to our bodies—as to all that is natural in us, we are linked still with the groaning creation. Although the new man created within us is endowed with new and heavenly life—although our souls are made acquainted with the hope full of glory that redemption brings—yet our bodies are not yet brought under the applied power of redemption. We *wait for* “the redemption of our body,” and therefore as to our bodies, and all that is merely natural in us, we are linked to that which groaneth. Yet whilst, as to the flesh, linked for a season with the old creation that groaneth, we are on the other hand, through the Spirit, linked with the new creation of God in Christ risen. We must never forget this duplicate condition of the believer. On the one hand linked with that which groaneth—on the other

associated with all glory and all blessing according to God in Heaven. And as there is this duplicate condition, so there is a two-fold character in the groan. First, “we groan, being burdened”—we groan under a sense of present sorrow; but secondly, hope itself when long exercised causeth a groan—the groan, not of bitterness or discontent, but the groan of desire—the sigh after that which we long for—we sigh whilst we wait. Much indeed depends on our recognising this two-fold relation of the believer. Suppose we thought of ourselves only as linked with that which groans around us, how should we be depressed? And suppose we endeavour to remove that depression by hiding from ourselves the reality of the groan, would that help us? Would not the voice of conscience break through the delusion and tell us that we were deceiving ourselves by a falsehood? And then if we turned from the scene without to that which is within, and looked into our own hearts and saw “sin” struggling there, what would remain to us but depression or despair—if it were not for the testimony of such a chapter as this?

Then is the time when we should turn to the word of God and say, I know indeed that the whole creation groaneth; I know that, as to the flesh, I am linked with that which groaneth; I know that in this “my body of humiliation,” I may learn many a lesson of bitter suffering, but I also know that in Christ, and because of Him, I am linked with all the glory and all the blessedness of the new creation

of God. He too has borne all my guilt. In Him I live unto God. To His likeness I am to be conformed in glory. Such is the reasoning of faith—such its use of the word of God. It rests not upon the clearness or adequacy of its own apprehensions. It knows well that they are inadequate and imperfect. But it rests on this—that God hath in His word promised these blessings to every one that believeth: and God is faithful.

Hence the triumphant conclusion of this chapter. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” It belongs to God to pronounce righteous. It is His prerogative “to impute righteousness without works”—and this He has done for all His believing people. Who then will dare to condemn them? And if we ask the ground of this justification, the answer is this, “It is *Christ* that died.” Hence our justification. And He who once died has also risen for His people, and “ever liveth to make intercession for them.” What then can separate from such love? Nothing can separate from it: “neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature.” There are times when our consciences perhaps may have some apprehension of what such words as “height” and “depth” mean. We may think of depths of condemnation or heights of glory; and at both our *nature* trembles. But neither height nor depth can separate from the love of Christ and of God. It is not our love to God, but God’s love to us of which this passage speaks. Our feeble, im-

perfect, and wavering love to Him would be a poor foundation for our hopes; but when we think of His love to us, granted in all fulness, because of Christ, then we see that there is a strong and abiding ground of comfort—love from which nothing can separate, as this chapter assures us.

Is it then unimportant to trace out these revealed results of redemption? And shall we reject the comfort of these words because our hearts do not realize them as they should? I trust not: but that we may receive them this day to strengthen our hearts towards God; that we might be encouraged to cleave to Him and to serve Him, for if that evil principle within us—“sin in the flesh” is judicially set aside, why may we not seek to serve Him? We may say, perhaps, “All that I perform is so feeble and poor; even if I resist evil, my resistance is so weak”—all this may be true, but does not He who accepts the persons of His people in the name of Christ, receive also their feeblest acts of service in the value of the same name?—so that the most trifling act, the cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus, comes to Him in the worthiness of that name.

May we then use the comfort of this chapter to strengthen our hearts in seeking to serve the Lord our God according to His word, in the separateness of His revealed truth. Such service—such separateness is greatly needed at the present hour. You will not find it a path unattended by trials, but you will find in it compensatory joys; and the trials

themselves become the means of exercising what the Scripture terms "endurance." The Scripture speaks often of "endurance": they dwell on it again and again, as if it were a grace perpetually needed—as if every day we should find ourselves called to bear some burden which we would gladly not bear. Yet when we say, "I desire to endure this burden or to submit to this privation for Christ's sake in faith towards God," how is the cup of suffering sweetened? How does it tend to nourish faith towards God—how is the dark scene of trial gilded by a ray of heavenly light when we think of the "praise of God"—for He is so gracious that He praises in His servants those things which He has a just title to require as duty at their hands. Yet in His grace He praises them even for those things, the neglect of which would have been failure and sin.

If great devotedness were the characteristic of the present hour, we should even then need these comforts; but how much more in a season of weakness when so often the hand hangs down and the knee becomes feeble! There is need at such a time of constant recurrence to the love and grace, and also to the forbearance and compassion of God, who is willing to give liberally, and upbraideth not for the past, who is willing to give increase of grace, who whilst He "resisteth the proud, giveth grace unto the humble." May we then be encouraged to abide in this faith, and serve Him, remembering "the recompense of the reward."

REGENERATION IN ITS CONNEXION WITH THE CROSS.

John iii. 1—15.

THERE are few parts of Scripture with which we are more conversant than this. From childhood almost, we are familiar with the sound of its words. We recur to it for two reasons; first, because it so clearly declares that solemn yet most blessed truth, “ye must be born again:” secondly, because of the simplicity with which it sets forth the great doctrine of salvation when speaking of Jesus as the anti-typical Serpent of Brass. Yet, although we know that our Lord’s reference to the Serpent of Brass arose out of what had before been said respecting regeneration, and that the instruction respecting both is given connectedly, we are continually wont to rend, as it were, the two truths asunder. We regard Regeneration and the Cross of Jesus, as subjects so remotely connected that they become to us separated, detached, objects of contemplation. And yet the very purpose of this chapter is to connect them: to teach us that the look of faith at the Cross of Jesus is the means whereby we become born of God.

When the Lord Jesus first spake of the necessity of regeneration, Nicodemus, in the pride of his ignorance, spurned the thought. But when, at last, he

was brought, in more submissiveness of mind, to ask, "How can these things be?"—when, no longer disputing the necessity of regeneration, he enquired concerning the means, did the Lord Jesus refuse to answer the question? Was it His object merely to declare to us the necessity of our being born again, and after having brought the weight of that conviction upon our souls, to leave us crushed with the additional conviction that it is as impossible for us to regenerate ourselves as it would be to attempt to create an universe? The Lord Jesus came not merely to teach us what is necessary. He came to supply *the means*—the full, certain, efficacious means whereby that which is necessary becomes attained; and to declare to us simply and plainly, what those means are. Accordingly, as soon as Nicodemus had enquired respecting the means of regeneration, the Lord Jesus spake of Himself lifted, like the Serpent of Brass, upon the Cross. This was no abrupt transition (as many seem to think) to another and unconnected subject. It was a direct, plain, simple answer to the question, "How can a man be born again?" The Lord Jesus says that whosoever looketh to Him crucified, as the dying Israelite looked to the Serpent which Moses lifted up, "hath eternal life"—that is, is born again; for no one can have eternal life who is not born again. Thus then we learn the means. It is the look of faith at Jesus crucified.

And now, for a moment, consider how simply the freedom and fulness of saving grace as proposed to

a lost world, is taught in the type of the Brazen Serpent. The Brazen Serpent was placed in the midst of Israel after they had been bitten by the fiery serpents sent among them on account of their sin. That sin was one of peculiar heinousness, They had found its occasion in one of their chief and most distinctive blessings—the gift of the manna, that heavenly food. Yet they preferred the flesh-pots of Egypt (for nature loves nature's food) and they murmured saying, "Our soul abhorreth this light bread." It was a sin which none, except those privileged as Israel were, could have committed: a sin therefore so aggravated by its circumstances that it was visited by a peculiar judgment. Fiery serpents were sent: their bite was certain death. Human power could interpose no protection, nor provide any remedy.

But God in His mercy pitied them, and proposed to them a remedy. It was provided for them in an object altogether external to themselves. The healing power placed in the Serpent of Brass in no way emanated from, in no way depended on, those to whom it was proposed. The Brazen Serpent had its efficacy in itself. God had placed it there: and it was an efficacy so potent, so certain in its operation, that all who were reached by it were healed, and that effectually. Death departed, and life came.

But who were reached by it? All who were not too proud, or too indifferent, or too mistrustful to look to it. In order that all might look to it, it was raised on high, in the very midst of, and in close

proximity to, those who were perishing. It was concealed in no secret sanctuary: it was hidden by no veil. No messenger was needed to seek and bring it from afar. It was not in the height, that they should inquire after it there; nor in the depth, that they should seek it there; but it was nigh them, present before their eyes. And lest there should be any one ignorant of its healing virtue, or any one who should question whether that virtue was designed, individually, for *him*, Moses was sent as the authorised interpreter of God's will respecting this. Moses as sent from God authoritatively declared that fulness of healing power was there: and he invited—nay, commanded all the bitten to look. He did not limit the invitation. He did not restrict it to those who felt *acutely* the pain of the bite, and deny it to others who felt it *less*. He did not prescribe what should be the nearness of the look, or its steadiness, or its clearness. He made no such distinctions either as to the character of the look, or as to the degree of apprehended pain; but he commanded *all who were bitten* to look. Their title to look, therefore, was found in the fact of their misery—in the fact that they were bitten and were perishing. How important to observe this: for this is a point on which many souls are, not unfrequently, greatly exercised. “We believe,” say they, “that all fulness of salvation is in Christ, and in Him alone. *That* we doubt not. But our question is, whether *we* have a title to look. If we found in ourselves any evidence of good—if we felt the burden of our sins more—

if we appreciated more deeply our sinfulness and better estimated the preciousness of Christ—if our motives in seeking Christ were pure or less selfish—if, in a word, we could find in ourselves any evidence of our election, then we should feel confidence to look: but, feeling as we do, we cannot. We fear that that salvation is not intended for us.” Thus although they acknowledge their need of Christ, and own that all salvation is in Christ, they yet stand aloof, looking on themselves as if they were cut off from it. Now, what is the error here? It consists in not seeing that our title to look is found in the fact of our ruin. Are there no tokens of moral ruin in us? Do we doubt that we are the sinful, corrupt children of Adam? Well then to us, as such, the commandment to look is sent. That commandment authorises us to look—nay, makes it a sin not to look. The salvation that is in Christ is not proposed to fallen angels, but is proposed to fallen men. If then, I repeat, we own ourselves to be the lost, corrupt children of Adam, we find in the very fact of being so, the evidence that the message of mercy is addressed to us. Our ruin is our title. We have not to say, “Do I appreciate this ruin adequately—do I feel my sin sufficiently?” Alas, who estimates his sinfulness as he ought to estimate it. Want of right appreciation is one of the chief characteristics of fallen man. We estimate nothing adequately; neither God, nor Christ, nor sin, nor grace, nor glory. If our title to look were grounded on the strength or adequacy of our appreciations,

we certainly should have no title. The question is not this, but whether the soul knows that its ruin is such that there can be no hope except in God. It was this that the dying Israelites recognised. They knew that the poison was in their veins, and there was in themselves no remedy. Therefore, when they found that God had visited them and placed before them an object in which healing power was, and had appointed as the means of connexion with that healing power, a look; and had sent His servant to bid them all to look, they hesitated not. They did look, and they were healed.

In every inquiry then respecting the aspect in which the Cross of Christ is to be set before men as men, we have always to remember this type, and to test our thoughts thereby. If they answer to this test, they are true—if not, false and deluding. If we preach the Gospel with less freeness than is indicated by the Serpent of Brass, we preach it not according to God's word. Nevertheless, we have equally to remember that Christ did not bear the judgment of the sins of any except His believing people. It was *their* sins, not those of the world, that He brought up (*ανηγειρε*) and presented for judgment in His own body on the accursed tree. Take heed of saying that the world's sins were borne by Him, for then the world would be absolutely forgiven. Every one who has Jesus for his substitute is everlastingly saved. Substitution is salvation. We must be very careful, therefore, to distinguish between these two aspects of the Cross of Christ:

that in which we preach it in all freeness to the world, and that in which we speak of it as the power of accomplished salvation to every one that believeth. Neither of these aspects is to be neutralised by the other. Often, indeed, men refuse to submit their understandings to the guidance of God's word, and instead of humbly listening, reason, and refuse to receive any thing that they cannot fully comprehend. When this is the condition of the heart, there is an end to all progress; for there is nothing that we fully comprehend. There is not one revealed truth taken with all its connexions, in which, if I choose to reason about it, and draw inferences according to my own thoughts, I should not find difficulties: and has God ever told us that we shall be able to solve all difficulties? Hereafter we shall be able, for then we are to "know even as also we are known;" but now "we know in part, and we prophesy in part, and see through a glass, darkly." At present I am only concerned to know these two things, first, *what* God has been pleased to reveal in His word; secondly, in *what aspect* it is presented. That aspect I am to receive, and that aspect to present to others, notwithstanding all apparent difficulties. These difficulties we leave with God, who will, by and bye, explain all things, and "be justified in His sayings, and overcome when He is judged."

Whenever, therefore, any, by means of the look of faith, become connected with the saving power that is in Christ, they receive according to our Lord's

own words, "eternal life." And is not every one who receives eternal life regenerate? To receive eternal life, and to be regenerate, are only different expressions for the same thing. He who has looked believingly at Jesus is regenerate. It is this connexion between regeneration and the look of faith at Jesus that is so often overlooked in reading this passage. The moment we see this, we shall never after read this chapter as if it spoke of separate detached branches of truth. We shall recognise the connexion, and see its value.

Think of the importance of this connexion. Do you desire that any dear to you should become regenerate? What will you say to them? Will you simply exhort them to be born again? Exhortation to an end unless accompanied by clear instruction as to the means, what does it profit? Will you merely tell them to pray that they may be born again? Will you turn them to Ritualism as their hope, and tell them that the priestly hand of man regenerates? Or will you bid them do nothing, but to wait listlessly, God's appointed time, if such appointed time there should be? Such are the devices of man, but what does the word of God tell us? It tells us that "the foolishness of preaching" is the instrument whereby "God saveth them that believe." If there be those whose regeneration we desire, He bids us speak to them of Jesus—of the love of Jesus—of the redemption that is in His blood. He tells us to place before them the Cross of Jesus—an object external to, and wholly discon-

nected with themselves—an object, too, invested with all the attractiveness of saving love—to tell them that God has there placed everlasting pardon and quickening power of life, and to bid them to look there and to live. This is something very different from bare exhortation as to the necessity of regeneration, or even exhortation unto prayer. What if Moses after the Serpent of Brass had been placed in the midst of Israel had disobeyed the command of God, and instead of directing them instantly to look and be healed, had hesitated and told them that they were, as yet, too weak to look, or too distant to look, or that the time was not come for them to look; or if he had directed them to pray instead of to look, or had proposed something else than the appointed look as the means of connecting them with the healing power that was in that saving object? But Moses fell into no such sin. He directed to the appointed object; and a look at that appointed object healed.

Some have said (for the heart is very ready to invent for itself difficulties) “we cannot look, we have not the power.” It is indeed very true that man has in himself no power to turn to God. He is “dead in trespasses and sins,” and has neither power nor disposition to seek after God. “Death in trespasses and sins,” denotes not only the absence and want of every right energy, but it also implies the presence of every wrong energy: for death toward God is life in respect of evil. We cannot draw too strong a picture of man’s moral death..

He is unable to turn to, or dispose himself for God. He has power for evil, but not for good. Nevertheless, we think not of impossibilities when God is before us. Israel were commanded to walk into the waters. They went on, and as they went, the waters divided. What if we have to prophesy to dead bones and say, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Do we hesitate? Do we say, they cannot hear? No, we think not about the dead bones, but of the quickening power of the living God. We speak to them, and life comes. Things that are impossible with men are possible with God. Our place, therefore, is not to talk about impossibilities but simply to present the great saving object of faith, and to wait on God. He has put the word of salvation into our lips, and has commanded us to preach it unto every creature, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Paul preached the saving power of the blood of Jesus: and the same power that enabled him to preach, opened Lydia's heart to receive his testimony, and the moment she did receive it, she was born of God. The Spirit of God (not making His own ministry prominent, but seeking to glorify the name of Jesus) directs the soul by means of the word of the gospel to Jesus. "Being born again," says the Apostle, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by means of the word of God*, . . . and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter i. 25.) It matters not whether it be the word read or the

word heard. The Spirit of God by means of the Gospel message directs the soul to Jesus, in whom quickening power of life is. "In Him was life." He was in truth the Living One: but more than this, He is the quickening or Life-giving One. "The bread of heaven is He that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." In the sixth of John He spake of Himself not only as the manna that sustains life, but as that which imparteth or giveth life. What we need as sinners, is, not that which sustains life (for we have no spiritual life to be sustained) but what we need is something to communicate life. And this God has provided in giving the true manna. He is not only the sustainer of life in the case of those, who, having believed, have life, but He is the giver of life—the quickening One (ὁ ζωοποιων, ὁ διδους ζωην) to those who have it not.

This truth respecting the quickening power that is in Jesus is frequently presented to us in Scripture. Thus in the Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. iii.), when the Apostle is contrasting his own ministry as a minister of the New Testament with that of Moses as the minister of the first Testament, he speaks of Moses as returning to Israel from God and presenting them with the written commandment (γραμμα) which God's own finger had written. It was holy indeed and blessed—a transcript of God's own holiness, but there was in it no quickening power. On the contrary, it became to them, because of their inability to meet its claims, the ministration of death. But

if, continues the Apostle, it be asked of us what we bring from God, we answer and say, we bring to you not a table of written precepts (*that* would not bring to you life) we bring to you Christ, and in ministering to you Christ, we minister unto you spirit (*πνευμα*) *i.e.*, spiritual life; for Christ as being God, one with the Father, and with the Holy Ghost, is Spirit in the same sense as they are Spirit, and as such has in Himself quickening power. The moment, therefore, the eye of the soul is turned in faith to Jesus we LIVE. We receive not only forgiveness of sins—not only righteousness, but life—life suited to the presence of God in glory—life preserved for us above the Heavens in our risen and glorified Head. Otherwise, how could we be brought into that circle of heavenly glory which pertains to us as joint-heirs with Christ, unless we had powers adequate for that sphere of light, purity, and holiness—a sphere where all is according to the power and perfectness of God? Accordingly, life suited to this sphere of glory is communicated to us. It is communicated the moment we look believingly to Jesus. How clear then is the connexion between regeneration and the Cross of Jesus.

Thus too we are enabled in our conflicts with Ritualism, to meet its falsehoods, not merely negatively by rejection, but positively by counter declaration of truth. It is not well to meet falsehood merely by negation. If we assault any stronghold of error we should also be able to point to the fortress of Truth. Ritualism professes to impart

heavenly life by priestly ministration. This has been the boast of Ritualism, Greek, Roman and Anglican, in every age. It was early made one of the favourite dogmas of those who, as soon as the Apostles died, began to depart from the faith, and turned unto fables. Many a Ritualist, however, maintains, that there is no salvation apart from Christ. Not unfrequently they speak much of Christ, asserting however, that His sacrifice was impetratory* (merely to use one of their own expressions)—that is, that it merely has efficacy to obtain certain aids or helps to salvation, in a word, that it brings salvability—not salvation. All who assert this, reject the Gospel; for the Scripture says, “by the foolishness of preaching God SAVETH them that believe”; and “saveth” is a positive unconditional word. “He that heareth my word,” said the Lord Jesus, “and believeth on Him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, (*κρισιν*,) but HATH PASSED (*μεταβεβηκεν*) from death unto life.” Again, many who seem to speak much of Christ, maintain, nevertheless, that the link which unites to Him is not faith—individual personal faith, but ritual ordinances to be administered by the hands of (so called) priestly men. This also is not the Gospel; for the Gospel makes

* Thus Bellarmine—*Sacrificium autem crucis non efficienter et immediate justificavit, sed tantum impetratorie et meritorie Sacrificium crucis non justificavit immediate, peccatores; sed placavit Deum, et impetravit ut, per debita media, peccatores ad salutem perducerentur.*

known not only where salvation is, but it also declares to us what God has appointed as the link to connect with that salvation: and that link is faith, and faith is *reliance*—reliance on an effectual work wrought for us by Another. What avails it to know that there is no salvation apart from Christ if we invent for ourselves a false mode of connexion therewith. What avails the best and strongest anchor if there be no chain to secure connexion with its strength? He who forges for himself either a false anchor, or a false chain, must perish in the storm.

But Ritualists not unfrequently taunt the servants of the Truth with being unable to state distinctly what the means of regeneration are. “*We*,” say they, “do not merely teach the necessity of regeneration, and then when men ask us as to the means, send them away unsatisfied; for *we* know the means. God has commissioned us to baptise, and so souls are quickened: whereas you go on exhorting men respecting regeneration, and bidding them pray that they may become regenerate, but means of regeneration you have none.” Such is their taunt; nor can we say that it is altogether undeserved. It is a point on which evangelical teaching has not been devoid of a certain obscurity of thought and statement. We can, however, easily free ourselves from the charge, for we are well able to direct to the means of regeneration, and that, the only real and true means. By our words—“by the foolishness of preaching,” we present to dying souls Christ as the Lamb slain—Christ as the anti-typical Serpent of Brass; and

the moment any look believably to the object we thus present, they are regenerate: life enters into them: they are born of God. The preaching of the Cross, therefore, is our *instrument* of regeneration. We bear this instrument, as it were, ever with us: we can use it in season and out of season: our testimony presents the Cross of Christ to perishing sinners: and whosoever in faith beholds it, lives. This is more than mere exhortation respecting regeneration: more than merely directing men to seek regeneration by prayer.

Well then may the servants of God glory in such a ministry. There must have been a joyful consciousness in the soul of Moses that he was engaged in a blessed service, when, going into the midst of the perishing multitudes, he placed before them an object in which power of perfect healing was, and said, "Look, and ye shall live." We may be discouraged, perhaps, at finding our ministry despised or rejected. Spiritual disease, we know, is little heeded, and its remedy little sought after. Multitudes during the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus flocked to Him for the cure of their bodily diseases, who responded not at all to His anxiety to become the everlasting refuge of their souls. We must not, therefore, be surprised to find our testimony to the saving power of His one sacrifice despised. Not indeed but that a want, on our part, of earnestness, and simplicity, and clearness, in preaching the saving power of the blood of Jesus, affects, very materially, the result. The present, however, is, as the Scripture declared it would be, a day peculiarly

marked by the rejection of Truth. God has plainly told us that in this dispensation Truth will not prevail. It is to share the rejection of His Son. The majority will be against it, not with it: so that if we measure the preciousness of God's Truth by the number of its servants or the extent of its diffusion, we may as well abandon it at once. It is of another dispensation—not of this, that it is written, "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." (Psalm lxxxv. 11.)

Truth, however, loses not its preciousness by being scorned. Nor do all scorn it. There are some who say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." And all such, feeble though they may be, are blessed for evermore. Christ is God's gift to them: Christ in all the fulness of His glorious Person: Christ in all His offices: Christ in everything that He has been or shall be manifested to be—all this fulness is, by God's inalienable gift, theirs.

The blessings given in Christ are not given detachedly or in fragments; although we may learn respecting them gradually. To have, and to be acquainted with what we have, are different things. The moment we believe, all things are ours; forgiveness, righteousness, acceptance, life, love, glory. Yet our acquaintance with these things, is, at the best, limited and partial; and some believers live and die without anything worthy of being called a realisation of their portion. Even in the true Church of God there are more like Thomas than

like Paul—persons to whom it ever need be said, “Be not faithless, but believing.” Nevertheless, when any one is once viewed by God as being in Christ (and so God does view every believer), he is then for ever known, not in respect of that which he himself is, but on the ground of what Christ is. Before I believe, I am known simply in my own individuality, that is to say, in my nothingness, and worthlessness, and sin; but after I believe, I am known in all the excellency of the merits and worthiness of Christ. What a change is this! It does not indeed immediately involve a change correspondingly great in all my apprehensions and feelings. The heart even of a believer is often slow to learn. But how complete is the change in my relation to God as judicially estimated in His courts above. It is as if a name that had been written in a book of judgment and everlasting death, were suddenly recognised as transferred into another register—the register of life and glory. Such is the change. In what degree results proportioned to this wondrous change may be developed here, is another question. That will depend on the measure in which we, through the spirit, learn the things that have been freely given to us of God. This, however, may be certainly affirmed, that new life is communicated to us the moment we believe; for there is then formed within us “the new man created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.” Such is the description given in the Scripture; and it is enough. We are not concerned with

accuracy of metaphysical definition ; nor do we desire to be wise beyond what is written. All who have any spiritual consciousness can very easily apprehend the difference between our old nature—the old man inherited from Adam, which is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” neither having, nor capable of having, any good thing,—we can easily recognise the difference between this and that new principle of being, “the new man created according to God”—the embryo (when first it is created in us) of that perfect condition of holiness and glory which is finally to be ours, when we are changed into the risen likeness of Christ. This new power of spiritual life which is thus created in us, in utter antagonism to our old nature, is not a mere influence of the Spirit of God ; nor is it the Holy Spirit personally (though the Holy Ghost comes to dwell with and to cherish it) ; but it is a creature (*κτισμα*), a result of the creative agency of the Spirit, effected by means of the look of faith to Jesus. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand in what sense the believer has in him new life.

Yet our thoughts are not limited to this. God has also made known to us where the great repository of our life in all fulness is. “Our life is hid with Christ in God.” Our possession of it *here*, in part, is the consequence of its being *there* in fulness. Whilst we say then that He is our redemption, and our sanctification, and our righteousness, we say also that He is our life. At present that life, as to its glory and its fulness, is hidden ; but soon it is to

come forth in its power, and then mortality and corruption and everything connected with myself as earthly, are to be "swallowed up." To be swallowed up is in one sense a thought from which we shrink. To be swallowed up of judgment, or of anything that would in that way overwhelm us, is terror; but to be swallowed up of life—life according to that unsearchable excellency in which it is known in Christ glorified, is not terror, but joy and blessing. To be swallowed up, so as for everything in me that is of the old man—everything that is earthly and that bears the likeness of the first Adam, to be swept away—to be as though it had not been, and for nothing to remain except that which is according to the heavenly likeness of Christ in glory—to be in this sense swallowed up of life, is triumph and joy unspeakable.

Such is the great final result of regeneration. Regeneration takes place here. It is effected *on earth* and is therefore said to be ἐπιγείον. *Here* we believe; *here* we are quickened. But if I speak of it when fully known in its manifested results, what does it involve? It involves the complete divestiture of my own natural being—of all in body, soul, and spirit, that is according to the likeness of the first Adam, and leaves me possessed of another condition of being, new, heavenly, spiritual, perfect, and glorious according to God. We have known what it is to bear the image of the earthy; we are soon to prove what it is to bear the image of the heavenly. We must take heed, therefore, when thinking of regen-

eration, not to limit our thoughts to the present fact of "the new man" being created in us. In its full and perfect sense—the sense of which it will be understood by us in Heaven, it involves the setting aside of everything in us that is cast in the mould of the first and earthy Adam, and the being, instead thereof, clothed upon with the likeness of our risen Lord.

Regeneration, therefore, as being the result of that power of life that dwells in Christ as the Son of the living God, is appropriately taught to us in the Gospel of John—that being the Gospel in which the glory of the person of Christ is made peculiarly prominent. It is *there* we read of Him as "the Life" and as "the Light," as "the Word that was with God and was God"—as the "Son of Man $\delta\ \acute{\omega}\nu$, (the Being-one) in Heaven"—as One who is from above, and came down from Heaven—as One who could say, "before Abraham was I AM." In Him was life in the same sense in which we ascribe life unto God. All fulness was in Him, "and out of His fulness have we all received." Such is the fountain from whom the springs of our new life flow.

But it was not sufficient, in order to meet our need, that He should be the Living One in the glory of His own divine and eternal life. It was needful also that He should know death—death under wrath, for we need not only life, but *redemption*. If instead of "taking hold of" us, He had been pleased to "take hold of" the holy angels in order to raise them into His own sphere of glorious

being, Redemption would not have been needed, for the holy angels have never sinned. But "He taketh not hold of angels—of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold," that is, of the family of faith; for all who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. But they, the appointed family of God, were found in sin—"children of wrath, even as others;" and therefore redemption was needed: and redemption could only be by submission to wrath. The floods of Divine wrath must first be entered and passed through; but who could meet the wrath of the living God and bear it, and perish not? None but the man who was Jehovah's "fellow"—no other could go beneath that wrath and live. Yet this He did. Wrath which was our rightful due, He as His people's Substitute met. He entered the deep waters; and they overflowed Him. He placed Himself beneath the power of death; but He rose also from it: and we too have risen from it (viewed as God views us) in Him. So viewed, we have passed through judicial death, and are born again into a new sphere of heavenly and spiritual being above the Heavens.

This was the truth that the Lord Jesus announced to Nicodemus when He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The instruction was conveyed symbolically ("water" being a symbolic word): for at that time neither Nicodemus nor the disciples were prepared for a full unfolding of the truth. Types, symbols and parables were therefore

employed by God, and by the Lord Jesus, for the communication of such truth as His people were not yet sufficiently ripe in knowledge to comprehend.

“Water” is continually used in the Scripture to denote the power of death. Think of the dark waters of which we read in Genesis, on which the Spirit of God moved, and out of which were brought the life and order which we now behold. The first creation was, in a certain sense, born out of water—“the earth standing out of the water (ἐξ ὕδατος) and in the water,” thus affording an early type of God’s acting in the midst of the power of death, and bringing out of it life, joy and gladness.

Again, at the flood. There, in an especial manner, “water” was known as the power of death and of wrath. What if we had seen the mighty floods gathering, and had heard the universal cry of anguish, and had beheld life swept from the earth, should we not have recognised in those floods the power of death? So likewise at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh and his host “sank as lead in the mighty waters.” And when Jonah cried unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly, and said, “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy

holy temple. The waters compassed me about even to the soul, the depths closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever; yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." So likewise in the Psalms, where the sufferings of a greater than Jonah are described. "Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me." Ps. lxxix. Thus, throughout the Scripture we find "water" continually used as the symbol of death and of wrath. And is it not needful that the power of the wrath thus symbolised should be met by us before we can enter into life? In our own persons, indeed, we cannot meet it. We should sink beneath its weight for ever. But in our Substitute we have met it. "If one died instead of all (*i.e.*, all believers, for of such he is speaking) then did the whole (*οἱ πάντες*—all believers) die.* 2 Cor. v. 14. How simple, how precious these words! The courts of God recognise substitutional death, so that believers are regarded as having judicially died when their Substitute and Representative died.† Such is the result of Christ's vicarious

* *Εἰ εἰς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ὥστε οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον.*

† For which reason "water" is used in Baptism to represent the power of death and of wrath. "Buried with Him in baptism." "Water," therefore, in the third of John, as a symbolic *word*, represents to the ear, what "water" as a

death for His people. He was the true Ark, provided to bear us safely through the waters. Christ, remember, is the Ark—not the Church. Have any taught you that the Church is the Ark? See that you cast from you the thought as one of the most dangerous of the snares of the father of lies. The Church, the Ark! Has the Church borne us through the waters of wrath? Has the Church become a Saviour to itself?—that body which because of its peculiar unfaithfulness and failure in its corporate character, as the Church, peculiarly merits wrath. How can that which merits wrath deliver from wrath? Never, therefore, listen to any delusive falsehoods respecting the Church being the Ark. Christ is the Ark. On Him the waters descended—Him they surrounded—through them He bore His people. In Him we passed through, and out of, the power of death, and are born into a new creation.

If then, as represented by our holy Substitute, we have passed through judicial death; if as viewed in Him we have lain for a season in the womb of death, and in Him have been born out of it, we can easily understand in what sense our maternal parentage may be ascribed to death. When we speak figuratively we say, that we are born of

symbolic *thing* in baptism presents to the eye. In either case, it represents that power of death and wrath through which believers have, in their Substitute, passed. See this subject further considered in "Doctrine of Scripture respecting Baptism," as advertised at the end.

water: that is to say, we have been born of death. It is thus we enter on a new, cleansed, regenerate condition of being. The result of dying representatively in our Substitute is, that we become *divested* of all that characterises us as the fallen children of the earthly Adam—*divested* of our earthy selves, and therefore cleansed. Without such divestiture, regeneration could not be; because he who is born again must, as a pre-requisite to the becoming possessed of a new condition of being, be divested of that condition of being that was previously his. And seeing that our first or natural condition of being is defiled (for sin has become inseparably bound up with all that we naturally are in body, soul, and spirit), he who is divested of such a condition of being, may well be said to be *cleansed*. In this, consequently, we find the connection between cleansing, and judicial death received for us by our Representative. And thus the two meanings of “water” are connected. It represents judicial death: but to those who receive that judicial death in Christ, it represents everlasting cleansing.

But we read of the great Head of the Church, that “having been put to death in the flesh,” because of His people’s sins, He was also “quickened by the Spirit.” We read likewise, that “the exceeding working of that mighty power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead,” was “to usward who believe”; and that we have been so reached by it that we are “quickened in Christ, and raised up together with Him, and

made to sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*." Here then we learn the character and the result of that quickening power through the Spirit, which, reaching us through and in Christ, has already enabled us to say that His resurrection and ascension into glory is *virtually* our resurrection and ascension into glory. Believers are not only quickened, but quickened *in Him*. In Him we are brought into a new creation where all things are according to God. When, as represented by our Substitute, we were shut up for a season into the darkness of judicial death, the exceeding working of that mighty power referred to in the text just quoted, was first put forth in raising Him as our Head; and we are personally reached by it as soon as the same Spirit causes us, by means of the Gospel, to look to Jesus, and so associates us personally and actually with that power of life which is in Him, and operates through Him. Accordingly, the agency by which we are quickened and brought in association with Christ risen, out of judicial death into the glory of this new creation, is fitly ascribed to the Spirit. It is in this sense that we are said to be "born of the Spirit."

The condition of those who are thus born of the Spirit is according to their parentage. As seen in Christ risen (for there we find the pattern of that new condition of being which is already ours in title, and to which we are finally to be conformed in body, soul, and spirit,)—as seen in our risen Head it is a condition of being altogether according to the

Spirit. Here we bear the image of the first man who was earthy: there we are to bear the likeness of the last Adam who is a quickening Spirit. All the circumstances of our being there are spiritual. Even our bodies are to be spiritual bodies. Regeneration, viewed in the fulness of its scope, implies nothing short of being brought into that heavenly condition of being which pertains to our risen Lord. Hence we see the force of those words, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Our parentage as born out of death by the quickening power of the Spirit will be marked in all the circumstances of our condition. The whole condition of our being will be no longer material and subject to the laws which now limit our earthly being, but we shall be like the winds whose laws and whose course are beyond the apprehension and cognizance of human thought. "As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Observe, it is not the Spirit that is here compared to the wind, but those who are born of the Spirit. *Their* condition is, by human thought, untraceable.*

The power by which this transformation (ultimately so complete and so glorious) is effected, reaches us whilst we are yet on earth. Regene-

* The force of the passage is, in great measure, lost by our not being able to use in English the same word to express Spirit and wind: in the original, *πνευμα* expresses both.

ration takes place here. *Here* we hear the Gospel: *here* we believe: *here* we are quickened through faith in Jesus: *here* too we are to be changed into the risen likeness of our Lord, for we are to rise from the grave glorified. *Here* too the Lord Jesus accomplished that which secures to us all these blessings: for they flow from His death and resurrection, both which were accomplished by Him in the earth, before He ascended above the Heavens. It was to this He referred when He said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you things that take place on earth (*ἐπιγεια*) and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of things whose sphere is above the heavens?" *επουρανια*—(*על השמים*) Things which (to speak typically) belonged to the earthly court of Israel's Temple, where the Altar and the Laver stood, ought to have been understood by one who worshipped in those courts. The washing received at the laver especially indicated that cleansing, not merely from our sins, but from our sinful selves, which regeneration brings. But Nicodemus, though a master in Israel, understood not even that which pertained to the Temple's earthly court. How then could he be taught respecting other mercies that belonged to the heavenly courts, or were hidden within the veil? He who was unable to discern the presence on earth of the true manna then present before his eyes, was not likely to understand any lesson that might be given respecting that hidden manna that was to be laid up beneath the mercy-seat in the holiest of all. If Christ be

not recognized in His offices on earth, He certainly will not be discerned in His offices above the heavens.

When regeneration is thus viewed in connexion with the grace and power that is in Jesus, it ceases to be a terrifying thought. The words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye must be born again," will no longer be heard by us with hopelessness or dismay. To be divested of our wretched, corrupt, earthy selves, and instead thereof to be clothed upon with the risen likeness of our glorified Lord, is a thought not of terror, but of peace, and joy, and glory. Who would wish to retain one element of his earthy being—one characteristic of his fallen self? Who would not rejoice to be changed into the perfect likeness of his Lord? Yet this blessing, vast and unsearchable as it is, is brought to us and secured to us by what? By Christ as the Serpent of Brass—an object brought into the midst of our ruin—into the midst of the city of Destruction, and presented to sinners there,—that they might behold it and live. Hence the peculiar preciousness of this chapter. It is precious not only because of the view that it opens into the new creation and our glory there in association with our risen Head, but it is equally precious because of the simplicity with which it shows the means of attaining that new and heavenly life and glory. Faith in Jesus as the Serpent of Brass is the appointed means.

If we believe these things, may we not well say that we count all things but as dung and dross, com-

pared with the excellency of them? This is what we *ought* to say, though probably there will be found a languor in our apprehensions, and a feebleness in our faith that may check the utterance. St. Paul recognised that the fact of the death and resurrection of His mighty Substitute had truly brought him to God and to glory above the Heavens. He knew that the Spirit had been sent as the Spirit of power and of glory to strengthen him in the realisation of that truth. He sought therefore to realise it, that so, being strengthened by this knowledge, he might move on in the power of new hopes, against the tide of circumstances that never ceases to flow against those who seek to walk in fellowship with the Truth. He pressed forward not indeed uncertainly, but yet watchfully and earnestly, that he might lay hold on the final prize. He was earnest because God had commanded earnestness: he was confident, not because of his earnestness, but because he knew that a faithful and almighty hand had grasped him: for he speaks of laying hold of that for which Christ had laid hold upon him. The greater the feebleness, the more need is there to remind ourselves of the strength and faithfulness of that hand which has surely grasped the weakest of those who have hoped in the blood of the Lamb. Of all such we can say, that they are born of God: that they are under the care of a covenant Shepherd who has brought them into the inheritance of life, and keeps them in that "narrow" path of Truth and holiness, which alone leads thereunto.

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